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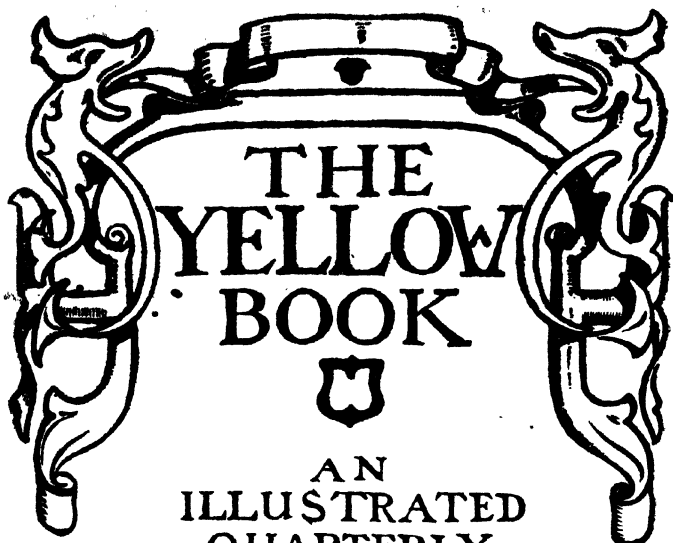
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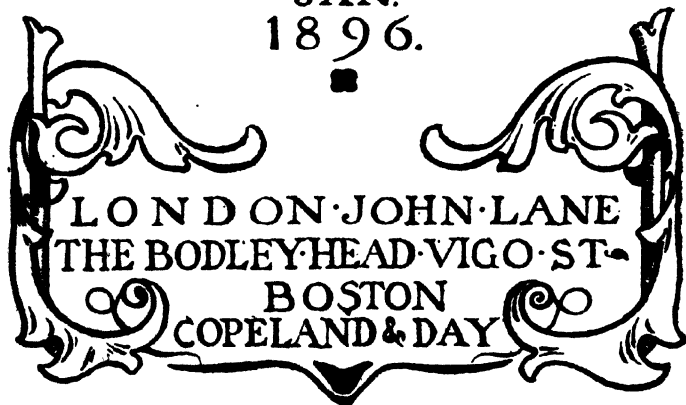

Volume VIII January, 1896

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A Girl's Head

By D. Y. Cameron



The Foolish Virgin

By George Gissing

COMING down to breakfast, as usual, rather late, Miss Jewell was surprised to find several persons still at table. Their conversation ceased as she entered, and all eyes were directed to her with a look in which she discerned some special meaning. For several reasons she was in an irritable humour; the significant smiles, the subdued "Good mornings," and the silence that followed, so jarred upon her nerves that, save for curiosity, she would have turned and left the room.

Mrs. Banting (generally at this hour busy in other parts of the house) inquired with a sympathetic air whether she would take porridge; the others awaited her reply as if it were a matter of general interest. Miss Jewell abruptly demanded an egg. The awkward pause was broken by a high falsetto.

"I believe you know who it is all the time, Mr. Drake," said Miss Ayres, addressing the one man present.

"I assure you I don't. Upon my word, I don't. The whole thing astonishes me."

Resolutely silent, Miss Jewell listened to a conversation the drift of which remained dark to her, until some one spoke the name "Mr. Cheeseman;" then it was with difficulty that she controlled her face and her tongue. The servant brought her an egg. She struck

The Foolish Virgin

struck it clumsily with the edge of the spoon, and asked in an affected drawl :

“What are you people talking about ? ”

Mrs. Sleath, smiling maliciously, took it upon herself to reply.

“Mr. Drake has had a letter from Mr. Cheeseman. He writes that he’s engaged, but doesn’t say who to. Delicious mystery, isn’t it ? ”

The listener tried to swallow a piece of bread-and-butter, and seemed to struggle with a constriction of the throat. Then, looking round the table, she said with contemptuous pleasantry :

“Some lodging-house servant, I shouldn’t wonder.”

Every one laughed. Then Mr. Drake declared he must be off, and rose from the table. The ladies also moved, and in a minute or two Miss Jewell sat at her breakfast alone.

She was a tall, slim person, with unremarkable, not ill-moulded features. Nature meant her to be graceful in form and pleasantly feminine of countenance ; unwholesome habit of mind and body was responsible for the defects that now appeared in her. She had no colour, no flesh ; but an agreeable smile would well have become her lips, and her eyes needed only the illumination of healthy thought to be more than commonly attractive. A few months would see the close of her twenty-ninth year ; but Mrs. Banting’s boarders, with some excuse, judged her on the wrong side of thirty.

Her meal, a sad pretence, was soon finished. She went to the window and stood there for five minutes looking at the cabs and pedestrians in the sunny street. Then, with the languid step which had become natural to her, she ascended the stairs and turned into the drawing-room. Here, as she had expected, two ladies sat in close conversation. Without heeding them, she
walked

walked to the piano, selected a sheet of music, and sat down to play.

Presently, whilst she drummed with vigour on the keys, some one approached ; she looked up and saw Mrs. Banting ; the other persons had left the room.

"If it's true," murmured Mrs. Banting, with genuine kindness on her flabby lips, "all I can say is that it's shameful—shameful !"

Miss Jewell stared at her.

"What do you mean ?"

"Mr. Cheeseman—to go and——"

"I don't understand you. What is it to me ?"

The words were thrown out almost fiercely, and a crash on the piano drowned whatever Mrs. Banting meant to utter in reply. Miss Jewell now had the drawing-room to herself.

She "practised" for half an hour, careering through many familiar pieces with frequent mechanical correction of time-honoured blunders. When at length she was going up to her room, a grinning servant handed her a letter which had just arrived. A glance at the envelope told her from whom it came, and in privacy she at once opened it. The writer's address was Glasgow.

"My dear Rosamund," began the letter, "I can't understand why you write in such a nasty way. For some time now your letters have been horrid. I don't show them to William because if I did he would get into a tantrum. What I have to say to you now is this, that we simply can't go on sending you the money. We haven't it to spare, and that's the plain truth. You think we're rolling in money, and it's no use telling you we are not. William said last night that you *must* find some way of supporting yourself, and I can only say the same. You are a lady and had a thorough

thorough good education, and I am sure you have only to exert yourself. William says I may promise you a five-pound note twice a year, but more than that you must not expect. Now do just think over your position——”

She threw the sheet of paper aside, and sat down to brood miserably. This little back bedroom, at no time conducive to good spirits, had seen Rosamund in many a dreary or exasperated mood; to-day it beheld her on the very verge of despair. Illuminated texts of Scripture spoke to her from the walls in vain; portraits of admired clergymen smiled vainly from the mantelpiece. She was conscious only of a dirty carpet, an ill-made bed, faded curtains, and a window that looked out on nothing. One cannot expect much for a guinea a week, when it includes board and lodging; the bedroom was at least a refuge, but even that, it seemed, would henceforth be denied her. Oh, the selfishness of people! And oh, the perfidy of man!

For eight years, since the breaking up of her home, Rosamund had lived in London boarding-houses. To begin with, she could count on a sufficient income, resulting from property in which she had a legitimate share. Owing to various causes, the value of this property had steadily diminished, until at length she became dependent upon the subsidies of kinsfolk; for more than a twelve-month now, the only person able and willing to continue such remittances had been her married sister, and Rosamund had hardly known what it was to have a shilling of pocket-money. From time to time she thought feebly and confusedly of “doing something,” but her aims were so vague, her capabilities so inadequate, that she always threw aside the intention in sheer hopelessness. Whatever will she might once have possessed had evaporated in the boarding-house atmosphere. It was hard to believe that her brother-in-law would ever withhold the poor five pounds a month.

And

And—what is the use of boarding-houses if not to renew indefinitely the hope of marriage?

She was not of the base order of women. Conscience yet lived in her, and drew support from religion; something of modesty, of self-respect, still clad her starving soul. Ignorance and ill-luck had once or twice thrown her into such society as may be found in establishments outwardly respectable; she trembled and fled. Even in such a house as this of Mrs. Banting's, she had known sickness of disgust. Herself included, four single women abode here at the present time; and the scarcely disguised purpose of every one of them was to entrap a marriageable man. In the others, it seemed to her detestable, and she hated all three, even as they in their turn detested her. Rosamund flattered herself with the persuasion that she did not aim merely at marriage and a subsistence; she would not marry *any* one; her desire was for sympathy, true companionship. In years gone by she had used to herself a more sacred word; nowadays the homely solace seemed enough. And of late a ray of hope had glimmered upon her dusty path. Mr. Cheeseman, with his plausible airs, his engaging smile, had won something more than her confidence; an acquaintance of six months, ripening at length to intimacy, justified her in regarding him with sanguine emotion. They had walked together in Kensington Gardens; they had exchanged furtive and significant glances at table and elsewhere; every one grew aware of the mutual preference. It shook her with a painful misgiving when Mr. Cheeseman went away for his holiday and spoke no word; but probably he would write. He had written—to his friend Drake; and all was over.

Her affections suffered, but that was not the worst. Her pride had never received so cruel a blow.

After a life of degradation which might well have unsexed her,
Rosamund

Rosamund remained a woman. The practice of affectations numberless had taught her one truth, that she could never hope to charm save by reliance upon her feminine qualities. Boarding-house girls, such numbers of whom she had observed, seemed all intent upon disowning their womanhood ; they cultivated masculine habits, wore as far as possible male attire, talked loud slang, threw scorn (among themselves at all events) upon domestic virtues ; and not a few of them seemed to profit by the prevailing fashion. Rosamund had tried these tactics, always with conscious failure. At other times, and vastly to her relief, she aimed in precisely the opposite direction, encouraging herself in feminine extremes. She would talk with babbling *naïveté*, exaggerate the languor induced by idleness, lack of exercise, and consequent ill-health ; betray timidities and pruderies, let fall a pious phrase, rise of a morning for “early celebration” and let the fact be known. These and the like extravagances had appeared to fascinate Mr. Cheeseman, who openly professed his dislike for androgynous persons. And Rosamund enjoyed the satisfaction of moderate sincerity. Thus, or very much in this way, would she be content to live. Romantic passion she felt to be beyond her scope. Long ago—ah ! perhaps long ago, when she first knew Geoffrey Hunt—

The name, as it crossed her mind, suggested an escape from the insufferable *ennui* and humiliation of hours till evening. It must be half a year since she called upon the Hunts, her only estimable acquaintances in or near London. They lived at Teddington, and the railway fare was always a deterrent ; nor did she care much for Mrs. Hunt and her daughters, who of late years had grown reserved with her, as if uneasy about her mode of life. True, they were not at all snobbish ; homely, though well-to-do people ; but they had such strict views, and could not understand the

the existence of a woman less energetic than themselves. In her present straits, which could hardly be worse, their counsel might prove of value ; though she doubted her courage when it came to making confessions.

She would do without luncheon (impossible to sit at table with those "creatures") and hope to make up for it at tea ; in truth, appetite was not likely to trouble her. Then for dress. Wearily she compared this garment with that, knowing beforehand that all were out of fashion and more or less shabby. Oh, what did it matter ! She had come to beggary, the result that might have been foreseen long ago. Her faded costume suited fitly enough with her fortunes—nay, with her face. For just then she caught a sight of herself in the glass, and shrank. A lump choked her : looking desperately, as if for help, for pity, through gathering tears, she saw the Bible verse on the nearest wall : "Come unto me——" Her heart became that of a woful child ; she put her hands before her face, and prayed in the old, simple words of childhood.

As her call must not be made before half-past three, she could not set out upon the journey forthwith ; but it was a relief to get away from the house. In this bright weather, Kensington Gardens, not far away, seemed a natural place for loitering, but the alleys would remind her too vividly of late companionship ; she walked in another direction, sauntered for an hour by the shop windows of Westbourne Grove, and, when she felt tired, sat at the railway station until it was time to start. At Teddington, half a mile's walk lay before her ; though she felt no hunger, long abstinence and the sun's heat taxed her strength to the point of exhaustion ; on reaching her friend's door, she stood trembling with nervousness and fatigue. The door opened, and to her dismay she learnt that Mrs. Hunt was away from home.

Happily,

Happily, the servant added that Miss Caroline was in the garden.

"I'll go round," said Rosamund at once. "Don't trouble——"

The pathway round the pleasant little house soon brought her within view of a young lady who sat in a garden-chair, sewing. But Miss Caroline was not alone ; near to her stood a man in shirt-sleeves and bare-headed, vigorously sawing a plank ; he seemed to be engaged in the construction of a summer-house, and Rosamund took him at first sight for a mechanic, but when he turned round, exhibiting a ruddy face all agleam with health and good humour, she recognised the young lady's brother, Geoffrey Hunt. He, as though for the moment puzzled, looked fixedly at her.

"Oh, Miss Jewell, how glad I am to see you!"

Enlightened by his sister's words, Geoffrey dropped the saw, and stepped forward with still heartier greeting. Had civility permitted, he might easily have explained his doubts. It was some six years since his last meeting with Rosamund, and she had changed not a little ; he remembered her as a graceful and rather pretty girl, with life in her, even if it ran for the most part to silliness, gaily dressed, sprightly of manner ; notwithstanding the account he had received of her from his relatives, it astonished him to look upon this limp, faded woman. In Rosamund's eyes, Geoffrey was his old self ; perhaps a trifle more stalwart, and if anything handsomer, but with just the same light in his eyes, the same smile on his bearded face, the same cordiality of utterance. For an instant, she compared him with Mr. Cheeseman, and flushed for very shame. Unable to command her voice, she stammered incoherent nothings ; only when a seat supported her weary body did she lose the dizziness which had threatened downright collapse ; then she closed her eyes, and forgot everything but the sense of rest.

Geoffrey

Geoffrey drew on his coat, and spoke jestingly of his amateur workmanship. Such employment, however, seemed not inappropriate to him, for his business was that of a timber-merchant. Of late years he had lived abroad, for the most part in Canada. Rosamund learnt that at present he was having a longish holiday.

"And you go back to Canada?"

This she asked when Miss Hunt had stepped into the house to call for tea. Geoffrey answered that it was doubtful; for various reasons he rather hoped to remain in England, but the choice did not altogether rest with him.

"At all events"—she gave a poor little laugh—"you haven't pined in exile."

"Not a bit of it. I have always had plenty of hard work—the one thing needful."

"Yes—I remember—you always used to say that. And I used to protest. You granted, I think, that it might be different with women."

"Did I?"

He wished to add something to the point, but refrained out of compassion. It was clear to him that Miss Jewell, at all events, would have been none the worse for exacting employment. Mrs. Hunt had spoken of her with the disapprobation natural in a healthy, active woman of the old school, and Geoffrey himself could not avoid a contemptuous judgment.

"You have lived in London all this time?" he asked, before she could speak.

"Yes. Where else should I live? My sister at Glasgow doesn't want me there, and—and there's nobody else, you know." She tried to laugh. "I have friends in London—well, that is to say—at all events I'm not *quite* solitary."

The man smiled, and could not allow her to suspect how profoundly

The Foolish Virgin

foundly he pitied such a condition. Caroline Hunt had reappeared ; she began to talk of her mother and sister, who were enjoying themselves in Wales. Her own holiday would come upon their return ; Geoffrey was going to take her to Switzerland.

Tea arrived just as Rosamund was again sinking into bodily faintness and desolation of spirit. It presently restored her, but she could hardly converse. She kept hoping that Caroline would offer her some invitation—to lunch, to dine, anything ; but as yet no such thought seemed to occur to the young hostess. Suddenly the aspect of things was altered by the arrival of new callers, a whole family, man, wife and three children, strangers to Rosamund. For a time it seemed as if she must go away without any kind of solace ; for Geoffrey had quitted her, and she sat alone. On the spur of irrational resentment, she rose and advanced to Miss Hunt.

“Oh, but you are not going ! I want you to stay and have dinner with us, if you can. Would it make you too late ?”

Rosamund flushed and could scarce contain her delight. In a moment she was playing with the youngest of the children, and even laughing aloud, so that Geoffrey glanced curiously towards her. Even the opportunity of private conversation, which she had not dared to count upon was granted before long ; when the callers had departed Caroline excused herself, and left her brother alone with the guest for half an hour. There was no time to be lost ; Rosamund broached almost immediately the subject uppermost in her mind.

“Mr. Hunt, I know how dreadful it is to have people asking for advice, but if I *might*—if you could have patience with me—

“I haven’t much wisdom to spare,” he answered, with easy good-nature.

“Oh,

• "Oh, you are very rich in it, compared with poor me.—And my position is *so* difficult. I want—I am trying to find some way of being useful in the world. I am tired of living for myself. I seem to be such a useless creature. Surely even I must have *some* talent, which it's my duty to put to use! Where should I turn?" Could you help me with a suggestion?"

Her words, now that she had overcome the difficulty of beginning, chased each other with breathless speed, and Geoffrey was all but constrained to seriousness; he took it for granted, however, that Miss Jewell frequently used this language; doubtless it was part of her foolish, futile existence to talk of her soul's welfare, especially in *tête-à-tête* with unmarried men. The truth he did not suspect, and Rosamund could not bring herself to convey it in plain words.

"I do so envy the people who have something to live for!" Thus she panted. "I fear I have *never* had a purpose in life—I'm sure I don't know why. Of course I'm only a woman, but even women nowadays are doing so much. You don't despise their efforts, do you?"

"Not indiscriminately."

"If I could feel myself a profitable member of society!—I want to be lifted above my wretched self. Is there no great end to which I could devote myself?"

Her phrases grew only more magniloquent, and all the time she was longing for courage to say: "How can I earn money?" Geoffrey, confirmed in the suspicion that she talked only for effect, indulged his natural humour.

"I'm such a groveller, Miss Jewell. I never knew these aspirations. I see the world mainly as cubic feet of timber."

"No, no, you won't make me believe that. I *know* you have ideals!"

"That

The Foolish Virgin

"That word reminds me of poor old Halliday. You remember Halliday, don't you?"

In vexed silence, Rosamund shook her head.

"But I think you must have met him, in the old days. A tall, fair man—no? He talked a great deal about ideals, and meant to move the world. We lost sight of each other when I first left England, and only met again a day or two ago. He is married, and has three children, and looks fifty years old, though he can't be much more than thirty. He took me to see his wife—they live at Forest Hill."

Rosamund was not listening, and the speaker became aware of it. Having a purpose in what he was about to say, he gently claimed her attention.

"I think Mrs. Halliday is the kind of woman who would interest you. If ever any one had a purpose in life, *she* has."

"Indeed? And what?"

"To keep house admirably, and bring up her children as well as possible, on an income which would hardly supply some women with shoe-leather."

"Oh, that's very dreadful!"

"Very fine, it seems to me. I never saw a woman for whom I could feel more respect. Halliday and she suit each other perfectly; they would be the happiest people in England if they had any money. As he walked back with me to the station he talked about their difficulties. They can't afford to engage a good servant (if one exists nowadays), and cheap sluts have driven them frantic, so that Mrs. Halliday does everything with her own hands."

"It must be awful."

"Pretty hard; no doubt. She is an educated woman—otherwise, of course, she couldn't, and wouldn't, manage it. And, by-the-by

bye"—he paused for quiet emphasis—"she has a sister, unmarried, who lives in the country and does nothing at all. It occurs to one—doesn't it?—that the idle sister might pretty easily find scope for her energies."

Rosamund stared at the ground. She was not so dull as to lose the significance of this story, and she imagined that Geoffrey reflected upon herself in relation to her own sister. She broke the long silence by saying awkwardly:

"I'm sure *I* would never allow a sister of mine to lead such a life."

"I don't think you would," replied the other. And, though he spoke genially, Rosamund felt it a very moderate declaration of his belief in her. Overcome by strong feeling, she exclaimed:

"I would do *anything* to be of use in the world. You don't think I mean it, but I do, Mr. Hunt. I——"

Her voice filtered; the all-important word stuck in her throat. And at that moment Geoffrey rose.

"Shall we wait about? Let me show you my mother's fernery; she is very proud of it."

That was the end of intimate dialogue. Rosamund felt aggrieved, and tried to shape sarcasms, but the man's imperturbable good-humour soon made her forget everything save the pleasure of being in his company. It was a bitter-sweet evening, yet perhaps enjoyment predominated. Of course, Geoffrey would conduct her to the station; she never lost sight of this hope. There would be another opportunity for plain speech. But her desire was frustrated; at the time of departure, Caroline said that they might as well all go together. Rosamund could have wept for chagrin.

She returned to the detested house, the hateful little bedroom, and there let her tears have way. In dread lest the hysterical sobs should be overheard, she all but stifled herself.

Then,

The Foolish Virgin

Then, as if by blessed inspiration, a great thought took shape in her despairing mind. At the still hour of night she suddenly sat up in the darkness, which seemed illumined by a wondrous hope. A few minutes motionless; the mental light grew dazzling; she sprang out of bed, partly dressed herself, and by the rays of a candle sat down to write a letter:

"DEAR MR. HUNT,

"Yesterday I did not tell you the whole truth. I have nothing to live upon, and I *must* find employment or starve. My brother-in-law has been supporting me for a long time—I am ashamed to tell you, but I *will*, and he can do so no longer. I wanted to ask you for practical advice, but I did not make my meaning clear. For all that, you *did* advise me, and very well indeed. I wish to offer myself as domestic help to poor Mrs. Halliday. Do you think she would have me? I ask no wages—only food and lodging. I will work harder and better than any general servants—I *will indeed*. My health is not bad, and I am fairly strong. Don't—don't throw scorn on this! Will you recommend me to Mrs. Halliday—or ask Mrs. Hunt to do so? I beg that you will. Please write to me at once, and say yes. I shall be ever grateful to you.

"Very sincerely yours,

"ROSAMUND JEWELL."

This she posted as early as possible. The agonies she endured in waiting for a reply served to make her heedless of boarding-house spite, and by the last post that same evening came Geoffrey's letter. He wrote that her suggestion was startling. "Your motive seems to me very praiseworthy, but whether the thing would be possible is another question. I dare not take upon myself the responsibility of counselling you to such a step. Pray, take time, and think. I am most grieved to hear of your difficulties, but is there not some better way out of them?"

Yes,

Yes, there it was! Geoffrey Hunt could not believe in her power to do anything praiseworthy. So had it been six years ago, when she would have gone through flood and flame to win his admiration. But in those days she was a girlish simpleton; she had behaved idiotically. It should be different now; were it at the end of her life, she would prove to him that he had slighted her unjustly!

Brave words, but Rosamund attached some meaning to them. The woman in her—the ever-prevailing woman—was wrought by fears and vanities, urgencies and desires, to a strange point of exaltation. Forthwith, she wrote again: "Send me, I entreat you, Mrs. Halliday's address. I will go and see her. No, I can't do anything but work with my hands. I am no good for anything else. If Mrs. Halliday refuses me, I shall go as a servant into some other house. Don't mock at me; I don't deserve it. Write at once."

Till midnight she wept and prayed.

Geoffrey sent her the address, adding a few dry words: "If you are willing and able to carry out this project, your ambition ought to be satisfied. You will have done your part towards solving one of the gravest problems of the time." Rosamund did not at once understand; when the writer's meaning grew clear, she kept repeating the words, as though they were a new gospel. Yes! she would be working nobly, helping to show a way out of the great servant difficulty. It would be an example to poor ladies, like herself, who were ashamed of honest work. And Geoffrey Hunt was looking on. He must needs marvel; perhaps he would admire greatly; perhaps—oh, oh!

Of course, she found a difficulty in wording her letter to the lady who had never heard of her, and of whom she knew practically nothing. But zeal surmounted obstacles. She began by saying
that

that she was in search of domestic employment, and that, through her friends at Teddington, she had heard of Mrs. Halliday as a lady who might perhaps consider her application. Then followed an account of herself, tolerably ingenuous, and an amplification of the phrases she had addressed to Geoffrey Hunt. On an after-thought, she enclosed a stamped envelope.

Whilst the outcome remained dubious, Rosamund's behaviour to her fellow-boarders was a pattern of offensiveness. She no longer shunned them—seemed, indeed, to challenge their observation for the sake of meeting it with arrogant defiance. She rudely interrupted conversations, met sneers with virulent retorts, made herself the common enemy. Mrs. Banting was appealed to; ladies declared that they could not live in a house where they were exposed to vulgar insult. When nearly a week had passed Mrs. Banting found it necessary to speak in private with Miss Jewell, and to make a plaintive remonstrance. Rosamund's flashing eye and contemptuous smile foretold the upshot.

"Spare yourself the trouble, Mrs. Banting. I leave the house to-morrow."

"Oh, but——"

"There is no need for another word. Of course, I shall pay the week in lieu of notice. I am busy, and have no time to waste."

The day before, she had been to Forest Hill, had seen Mrs. Halliday, and entered into an engagement. At midday on the morrow she arrived at the house which was henceforth to be her home, the scene of her labours.

Sheer stress of circumstance accounted for Mrs. Halliday's decision. Geoffrey Hunt, a dispassionate observer, was not misled in forming so high an opinion of his friend's wife. Only a year or two older than Rosamund, Mrs. Halliday had the mind and the temper

temper which enable woman to front life as a rational combatant, instead of vegetating as a more or less destructive parasite. Her voice declared her; it fell easily upon a soft, clear note; the kind of voice that expresses good-humour and reasonableness, and many other admirable qualities; womanly, but with no suggestion of the feminine gamut; a voice that was never likely to test its compass in extremes. She had enjoyed a country breeding; something of liberal education assisted her natural intelligence; thanks to a good mother, she discharged with ability and content the prime domestic duties. But physically she was not inexhaustible, and the laborious, anxious years had taxed her health. A woman of the ignorant class may keep house, and bring up a family, with her own hands; she has to deal only with the simplest demands of life; her home is a shelter, her food is primitive, her children live or die according to the law of natural selection. Infinitely more complex, more trying, is the task of the educated wife and mother; if to conscientiousness be added enduring poverty, it means not seldom an early death. Fatigue and self-denial had set upon Mrs. Halliday's features a stamp which could never be obliterated. Her husband, her children, suffered illnesses; she, the indispensable, durst not confess even to a headache. Such servants as from time to time she had engaged merely increased her toil and anxieties; she demanded, to be sure, the diligence and efficiency which in this new day can scarce be found among the menial ranks; what she obtained was sluttish stupidity, grotesque presumption, and every form of female viciousness. Rosamund Jewell, honest in her extravagant fervour, seemed at first a mocking apparition; only after a long talk, when Rosamund's ingenuousness had forcibly impressed her, would Mrs. Halliday agree to an experiment. Miss Jewell was to live as one of the family; she did not ask this, but consented to it. She was to receive

receive ten pounds a year, for Mrs. Halliday insisted that payment there must be.

"I can't cook," Rosamund had avowed. "I never boiled a potato in my life. If you teach me, I shall be grateful to you."

"The cooking I can do myself, and you can learn if you like."

"I should think I might wash and scrub by the light of nature?"

"Perhaps. Good will and ordinary muscles will go a long way."

"I can't sew, but I will learn."

Mrs. Halliday reflected.

"You know that you are exchanging freedom for a hard and a very dull life?"

"My life has been hard and dull enough, if you only knew. The work will seem hard at first, no doubt. But I don't think I shall be dull with you."

Mrs. Halliday held out her work-worn hand, and received a clasp of the fingers attenuated by idleness.

It was a poor little house; built—of course—with *sham* display of spaciousness in front, and huddling discomfort at the rear. Mrs. Halliday's servants never failed to urge the smallness of the rooms as an excuse for leaving them dirty; they had invariably been accustomed to lordly abodes, where their virtues could expand. The furniture was homely and no more than sufficient, but here and there on the walls shone a glimpse of summer landscape, done in better days by the master of the house, who knew something of various arts, but could not succeed in that of money-making. Rosamund bestowed her worldly goods in a tiny chamber which Mrs. Halliday did her best to make inviting and comfortable; she had less room here than at Mrs. Banting's, but the cleanliness of surroundings would depend upon herself, and she was not likely to

to spend much time by the bedside in weary discontent. Halliday, who came home each evening at half-past-six, behaved to her on their first meeting with grave, even respectful, courtesy; his tone flattered Rosamund's ear, and nothing could have been more seemly than the modest gentleness of her replies.

At the close of the first day, she wrote to Geoffrey Hunt: "I do believe I have made a good beginning. Mrs. Halliday is perfect and I quite love her. Please do not answer this; I only write because I feel that I owe it to your kindness. I shall never be able to thank you enough."

When Geoffrey obeyed her and kept silence, she felt that he acted prudently; perhaps Mrs. Halliday might see the letter, and know his hand. But none the less she was disappointed.

Rosamund soon learnt the measure of her ignorance in domestic affairs. Thoroughly practical and systematic, her friend (this was to be their relation) set down a scheme of the day's and the week's work; it made a clear apportionment between them, with no preponderance of unpleasant drudgery for the new-comer's share. With astonishment, which she did not try to conceal, Rosamund awoke to the complexity and endlessness of home duties even in so small a house as this.

"Then you have *no* leisure?" she exclaimed, in sympathy, not remonstrance.

"I feel at leisure when I'm sewing—and when I take the children out. And there's Sunday."

The eldest child was about five years old, the others three and a twelvemonth, respectively. Their ailments gave a good deal of trouble, and it often happened that Mrs. Halliday was awake with one of them the greater part of the night. For children Rosamund had no natural tenderness; to endure the constant sound of their voices proved, in the beginning, her hardest trial; but the

the resolve to school herself in every particular soon enabled her to tend the little ones with much patience, and insensibly she grew fond of them. Until she had overcome her awkwardness in every task, it cost her no little effort to get through the day ; at bedtime she ached in every joint, and morning oppressed her with a sick lassitude. Conscious, however, of Mrs. Halliday's forbearance, she would not spare herself, and it soon surprised her to discover that the rigid performance of what seemed an ignoble task brought its reward. Her first success in polishing a grate gave her more delight than she had known since childhood. She summoned her friend to look, to admire, to praise.

"Haven't I done it well? Could you do it better yourself?"

"Admirable!"

Rosamund waved her black-lead brush, and tasted victory.

The process of acclimatization naturally affected her health. In a month's time she began to fear that she must break down ; she suffered painful disorders, crept out of sight to moan and shed a tear. Always faint, she had no appetite for wholesome food. Tossing on her bed at night, she said to herself a thousand times : "I must go on, even if I die!" Her religion took the form of asceticism, and bade her rejoice in her miseries ; she prayed constantly, and at times knew the solace of an infinite self-glorification. In such a mood she once said to Mrs. Halliday :

"Don't you think I deserve some praise for the step I took?"

"You certainly deserve both praise and thanks from me."

"But I mean—it isn't every one who could have done it? I've a right to feel myself superior to the ordinary run of girls?"

The other gave her an embarrassed look, and murmured a few satisfying words. Later in the same day she talked to Rosamund about her health, and insisted on making certain changes which allowed her to take more open-air exercise. The result of this

was

was a marked improvement ; at the end of the second month Rosamund began to feel and look better than she had done for several years. Work no longer exhausted her. And the labour in itself seemed to diminish, a natural consequence of perfect co-operation between the two women. Mrs. Halliday declared that life had never been so easy for her as now ; she knew the delight of rest in which there was no self-reproach. But, for sufficient reasons, she did not venture to express to Rosamund all the gratitude that was due.

About Christmas, a letter from Forest Hill arrived at Teddington ; this time it did not forbid a reply. It spoke of struggles, sufferings, achievements. "Do I not deserve a word of praise ? Have I not done something, as you said, towards solving the great question ? Don't you believe in me a little ?" Four more weeks went by, and brought no answer. Then, one evening, in a mood of bitterness, Rosamund took a singular step ; she wrote to Mr. Cheeseman. She had heard nothing of him, had utterly lost sight of the world in which they met ; but his place of business was known to her, and thither she addressed the note. A few lines only : "You are a very strange person, and I really take no interest whatever in you. But I have sometimes thought you would like to ask my forgiveness. If so, write to the above address—my sister's. I am living in London, and enjoying myself, but I don't choose to let you know where." Having an opportunity on the morrow, Sunday, she posted this in a remote district.

The next day, a letter arrived for her from Canada. Here was the explanation of Geoffrey's silence. His words could hardly have been more cordial, but there were so few of them. On nourishment such as this no illusion could support itself ; for the moment Rosamund renounced every hope. Well, she was no worse

The Foolish Virgin

worse off than before the renewal of their friendship. But could it be called friendship? Geoffrey's mother and sisters paid no heed to her; they doubtless considered that she had finally sunk below their horizon; and Geoffrey himself, for all his fine words, most likely thought the same at heart. Of course they would never meet again. And for the rest of her life she would be nothing more than a domestic servant in genteel disguise—happy were the disguise preserved.

However, she had provided a distraction for her gloomy thoughts. With no more delay than was due to its transmission by way of Glasgow, there came a reply from Mr. Cheeseman: two sheets of notepaper. The writer prostrated himself; he had been guilty of shameful behaviour; even Miss Jewell, with all her sweet womanliness, must find it hard to think of him with charity. But let her remember what "the poets" had written about Remorse, and apply to *him* the most harrowing of their descriptions. He would be frank with her; he would "a plain, unvarnished tale unfold." Whilst away for his holiday he by chance encountered *one* with whom, in days gone by, he had held tender relations. She was a young widow; his foolish heart was touched; he sacrificed honour to the passing emotion. Their marriage would be delayed, for his affairs were just now anything but flourishing. "Dear Miss Jewell, will you not be my friend, my sister? Alas, I am not a happy man; but it is too late to lament." And so on to the squeezed signature at the bottom of the last page.

Rosamund allowed a fortnight to pass—not before writing, but before her letter was posted. She used a tone of condescension, mingled with airy banter. "From my heart I feel for you, but, as you say, there is no help. I am afraid you are very impulsive—yet I thought that was a fault of youth. Do not give way to despair.

despair. I really don't know whether I shall feel it right to let you hear again, but if it soothes you I don't think there would be any harm in your letting me know the cause of your troubles."

This odd correspondence, sometimes with intervals of three weeks, went on until late summer. Rosamund would soon have been a year with Mrs. Halliday. Her enthusiasm had long since burnt itself out; she was often a prey to vapours, to cheerless lassitude, even to the spirit of revolt against things in general, but on the whole she remained a thoroughly useful member of the household; the great experiment might fairly be called successful. At the end of August it was decided that the children must have sea air; their parents would take them away for a fortnight. When the project began to be talked of, Rosamund, perceiving a domestic difficulty, removed it by asking whether she would be at liberty to visit her sister in Scotland. Thus were things arranged.

Some days before that appointed for the general departure, Halliday received a letter which supplied him with a subject of conversation at breakfast.

"Hunt is going to be married," he remarked to his wife just as Rosamund was bringing in the children's porridge.

Mrs. Halliday looked at her helper—for no more special reason than the fact of Rosamund's acquaintance with the Hunt family; she perceived a change of expression, an emotional play of feature, and at once averted her eyes.

"Where? In Canada?" she asked, off-hand.

"No, he's in England. But the lady is a Canadian.—I wonder he troubles to tell me. Hunt's a queer fellow. When we meet, once in two years, he treats me like a long-lost brother; but I don't think he'd care a bit if he never saw me or heard of me again."

"It's

"It's a family characteristic," interposed Rosamund with a dry laugh.

That day she moved about with the gait and the eyes of a somnambulist. She broke a piece of crockery, and became hysterical over it. Her afternoon leisure she spent in the bedroom, and at night she professed a headache which obliged her to retire early.

A passion of wrath inflamed her ; as vehement—though so utterly unreasonable—as in the moment when she learnt the perfidy of Mr. Cheeseman. She raged at her folly in having submitted to social degradation on the mere hint of a man who uttered it in a spirit purely contemptuous. The whole hateful world had conspired against her. She banned her kinsfolk and all her acquaintances, especially the Hunts ; she felt bitter even against the Hallidays—unsympathetic, selfish people, utterly indifferent to her private griefs, regarding her as a mere domestic machine. She would write to Geoffrey Hunt, and let him know very plainly what she thought of his behaviour in *urging* her to become a servant. Would such a thought have ever occurred to a *gentleman* ! And her poor life was wasted, oh ! oh ! She would soon be thirty—thirty ! The glass mocked her with savage truth. And she had not even a decent dress to put on. Self-neglect had made her appearance vulgar ; her *manners*, her speech, doubtless, had lost their note of social superiority. Oh, it was hard ! She wished for death, cried for divine *justice* in a better world.

On the morning of release, she travelled to London Bridge, ostensibly *en route* for the north. But, on alighting, she had her luggage taken to the cloak-room, and herself went by omnibus to the West-end. By noon she had engaged a lodging, *one room* in a street where she had never yet lived. And hither ~~before~~ night was transferred her property.

The

• The next day she spent about half of her ready-money in the purchase of clothing—cheap, but such as the self-respect of a “lady” imperatively demands. She bought cosmetics ; she set to work at removing from her hands the traces of ignoble occupation. On the day that followed—Sunday—early in the afternoon, she repaired to a certain corner of Kensington Gardens, where she came face to face with Mr. Cheeseman.

“I have come,” said Rosamund, in a voice of nervous exhilaration which tried to subdue itself. “Please to consider that it is more than you could expect.”

“It is ! A thousand times more ! You are goodness itself.”

In Rosamund’s eyes the man had not improved since a year ago. The growth of a beard made him look older, and he seemed in indifferent health ; but his tremulous delight, his excessive homage, atoned for the defect. She, on the other hand, was so greatly changed for the better that Cheeseman beheld her with no less wonder than admiration. Her brisk step, her upright bearing, her clear eye, and pure-toned skin contrasted remarkably with the lassitude and sallowness he remembered ; at this moment, too, she had a pleasant rosiness of cheek which made her girlish, virginal. All was set off by the new drapery and millinery, which threw a shade upon Cheeseman’s very respectable but somewhat time-honoured, Sunday costume.

They spent several hours together, Cheeseman talking of his faults, his virtues, his calamities, and his hopes, like the impulsive, well-meaning, but nerveless fellow that he was. Rosamund gathered from it all, as she had vaguely learnt from his recent correspondence, that the alluring widow no longer claimed him ; but he did not enter into details on this delicate subject. They had tea at a restaurant by Notting Hill Gate ; then, Miss Jewell appearing indefatigable, they again strolled in unfrequented ways.

At length was uttered the question for which Rosamund had long ago prepared her reply.

"You cannot expect me," she said sweetly, "to answer at once."

"Of course not! I shouldn't have dared to hope——"

He choked and swallowed; a few beads of perspiration shining on his troubled face.

"You have my address; most likely I shall spend a week or ~~two~~ there. Of course you may write. I shall probab~~ly~~ go to my sister's in Scotland, for the autumn——"

"Oh! don't say that—don't! To lose you again—so soon——"

"I only said, 'probably'——"

"Oh, thank you!—To go so far away—And the autumn; just when I have a little freedom; the very best time—if I dared to hope such a thing——"

Rosamund graciously allowed him to bear her company as far as to the street in which she lived.

A few days later she wrote to Mrs. Halliday, heading her letter with the Glasgow address. She lamented the sudden impossibility of returning to her domestic duties. Something had happened. "In short, dear Mrs. Halliday, I am going to be married. I could not give you warning of this, it has come so unexpectedly. Do forgive me! I so earnestly hope that you will find some one to take my place, some one better and more of a help to you. I know I haven't been much use. Do write home at Glasgow and say I may still regard you as a dear friend."

This having been dispatched, she sat musing over her prospects. Mr. Cheeseman had honestly confessed the smallness of his income; he could barely count upon a hundred and fifty a year; but things *might* improve. She did not dislike him—no, she did not dislike him. He would be a very tractable husband. Compared, of course, with——

• A letter was brought up to her room. She knew the flowing commercial hand, and broke the envelope without emotion. Two sheets—three sheets—and a half. But what was all this? “Despair . . . thoughts of self-destruction . . . ignoble publicity . . . practical ruin . . . impossible . . . despise and forget . . . Dante’s hell . . . deeper than ever plummet sounded . . . forever! . . .” So again he had deceived her! He must have known that the widow was dangerous; his reticence was mere shuffling. His behaviour to that other woman had perhaps exceeded in baseness his treatment of herself; else, how could he be so sure that a jury would give her “ruinous damages”? Or was it all a mere illustration of a man’s villainy? Why should not *she* also sue for damages? Why not? Why not?

The three months that followed were a time of graver peril, of darker crisis, than Rosamund, with all her slip-slop experiences, had ever known. An observer adequately supplied with facts, psychological and material, would more than once have felt that it depended on the mere toss of a coin whether she kept or lost her social respectability. She sounded all the depths possible to such a mind and heart—save only that from which there could have been no redemption. A saving memory lived within her, and at length, in the yellow gloom of a November morning—her tarnished, drabble-tailed finery thrown aside for the garb she had worn in lowliness—Rosamund betook herself to Forest Hill. The house of the Hallidays looked just as usual. She slunk up to the door, rang the bell, and waited in fear of a strange face. There appeared Mrs. Halliday herself. The surprised but friendly smile at once proved her forgiveness of Rosamund’s desertion. She had written, indeed, with calm good sense, hoping only that all would be well.

“Let me see you alone, Mrs. Halliday.—How glad I am to sit in this room again! Who is helping you now?”

“No

"No one. Help such as I want is not easy to find."

"Oh, let me come back!—I am *not* married.—No, no, there is nothing to be ashamed of. I am no worse than I ever was. I'll tell you everything—the whole silly, wretched story."

She told it, blurring only her existence of the past three months.

"I would have come before, but I was so bitterly ashamed. I ran away so disgracefully. Now I'm penniless—all but suffering hunger. Will you have me again, Mrs. Halliday? I've been a horrid fool, but—I do believe—for the last time in my life. Try me again, dear Mrs. Halliday!"

There was no need of the miserable tears, the impassioned pleading. Her home received her as though she had been absent but for an hour. That night she knelt again by her bedside in the little room, and at seven o'clock next morning she was lighting fires, sweeping floors, mute in thankfulness.

Halliday heard the story from his wife, and shook a dreamy, compassionate head.

"For goodness' sake," urged the practical woman, "don't let her think she's a martyr."

"No, no; but the poor girl should have her taste of happiness."

"Of course I'm sorry for her, but there are plenty of people more to be pitied. Work she must, and there's only one kind of work she's fit for. It's no small thing to find your vocation—is it? Thousands of such women—all meant by nature to scrub and cook—live and die miserably because they think themselves too good for it."

"The whole social structure is rotten!"

"It'll last our time," rejoined Mrs. Halliday, as she gave a little laugh and stretched her weary arms.

A Southerly Air

By A. Frew



Rest

By Arthur Christopher Benson

TO-DAY I'll give to peace : I will not look
Behind, before me ; I will simply be ;
Hopes and regrets shall claim no share in me ;
Here will I lie, beside the leaping brook,
And turn the pages of some aimless book,
Sunk and submerged in vague felicity ;
Live, mute, and still, in what I hear and see,
The dreaming guardian of the upland nook.

Well, here's my world to-day ! cicalas spare
Sawing harsh music ; beetles big, that grope
Among the grass-stems ; merry flies astir ;
And goats with impudent face and silken hair,
That poise and tinkle on the Western slope,
Breast deep in Alpen-rose and juniper.

Study of a Calf

By D. Gauld



Two Stories

By Frances E. Huntley

I—Points of View

WHENEVER she recalled that incredible moment, she was conscious of a strange emotional excitement, that thrilled her with an exquisite poignancy, that set blushes momentarily flaming, that darkened her eyes, and parted her quick-breathing lips. She felt a little ashamed of the sensation, so that she wanted to put into words, to get somebody else's opinion on, what had occurred the evening before in the seductive corridor, where the lights were turned low nearly to extinction, and the scent of flowers penetrated and grew, till it took that keen metallic odour that seems almost tangible.

The scene, familiar to weariness, had held for her always a repulsion no less than an attraction; it seemed such a bid for playing at passion, and yet—commonplaces were so invariable there! Talk of the decorations, the floor, the guests, perhaps, as a rarer topic, the more or less uninteresting personality of her partner, minutely investigated—these had been the associations of the corridor: not that she had wished it otherwise, far from that; but . . . well! the feeling had been inexplicable, a mixture of relief and disappointment, that still there was so much to learn, that still it remained unlearned.

And

And the teacher? For him, she had imagined herself fastidious, critical of shades of manner, almost impossible to please; and now, this morning! . . . It had been a man whom she hardly knew, but with whom she felt conscious of a strange intimacy. He, too, repulsed and attracted her at once; said things to her that in any one else she would have passionately resented, spoke to her with an almost obtrusive *sans-gêne*, did not even especially amuse her, and yet—his attraction was invincible. Directly she came into a ball-room where he was, she perceived him, freshly disapproved of him, smiled at him, disarranged her card to include his dances, and, the dance over, came to sit out, in a corridor such as that last night, all voluptuousness and allurements. . . . She raged at herself perpetually, and would talk, none the less, her wittiest and brightest, and glance gaily into the eyes that looked back at her with a somewhat *posé* cynicism.

Last night! Over and over again the scene recalled itself, and thrilled her with that curious tremor. . . . She longed for a clearer view of it, a cool, unswayed opinion . . . yet to tell! It would be schoolgirlish, typical almost of silly loquacious womanhood; that was her first thought, then came another: the woman of the world—the half-cynical, half-tender type that attracted her so strongly, that she had met with in one woman, and loved so dearly. Would *she* have told? Yes, she could fancy her, in her bright allusive way, with her wide roguish gaze, and enchanting suggestion of a brogue. . . . So, she *would* tell, and then, she laughed to think how much she was making of it; it was such a little thing after all, wasn't it? . . . But she wavered again. It would sound so crude, such a bald, almost vulgar, statement. For, when all was said and done, what had happened? . . . In the moment that she felt her cheek tinge itself again with that vivid pink, another memory came to her,
vaguely,

vaguely, as it seemed, unmeaningly—of a public ball she had once gone to (a rare thing with her, she didn't care enough for dancing to pay for it, she always said), a ball at which were to be seen many people of whose manners and customs she was entirely ignorant. A scene she had witnessed there ! . . . the remembrance possessed her, a kind of unconscious cerebration, for which she could not account.

A corridor, once more almost deserted, save for herself and her partner, and, at the farther end, another couple, people she had never seen before ; the girl, flaunting, ill-dressed, in a gown of insistently meagre insufficiency, her hair heaped into unmeaning shapelessness, nowhere an outline, a severity, a grave dainty coquetry ; the effect was almost pathetic in its dull, bold cheapness. And the man !—hardly more, indeed, than a boy—he bore the huddled indistinctness, the look of imperfect detachment from the atmosphere, whose opposite we convey by the word “distinction.”

So, in a glance, she had seen them ; and, with a kind of absent curiosity, had watched them while she talked . . . Quite suddenly the man slipped to the ground beside his partner's chair, and passed his arm familiarly, jocosely, round her unreluctant waist. A moment more and their faces touched, their lips met, in a kiss . . . one which, it was abundantly evident, was not of deep feeling, or even the expression of an instant's real emotion ; no, there was an ineffable commonness, a painful coarsening of the action, visible even to unaccustomed eyes . . . it was “sport.” The girl had probably invited it ; the man, more than probably, was not the first who had been privileged. . . .

She had felt revolted.

Her partner had made some contemptuous remark : “Can't they do it in private ! If she likes being hugged——” The
mere

mere words had set her cheeks on fire, the careless, half-amused scorn of his tone, the matter-of-course for which he had taken it. She had rushed into one of her impetuous, heedless speeches :

"I would rather have a girl who has the *realness* in her to do something honestly wrong ! One can't call that 'wrong'—no, too good a word. It's only futile, common. Oh, better the poor girls whose weakness has something real in it, some—courage, foolishness . . . But that sort !"

The ring of her voice sounded in her ears when she recalled the scene. It had stamped itself oddly on her memory, was always coming back to her, haunting her. . . .

The clear, tender pink still lingered on her cheek ; for, once more, the public ball forgotten, she had gone over that little episode in the corridor last night—in the deserted, solitary corridor. Why did it thrill her so ? She did not love the man who had thus surprised her—love him ! Why, her acquaintance with him was of the slightest ; and his feeling for her ? She could not conceivably delude herself about that ; it was very much the same, she divined, as hers for him . . . Then why *was* it ? He *was* the first who had ever kissed her—could that be it ?

At the time she had felt angry, but more hurt than angry ; hurt at his audacity ; it seemed as if he must have thought her a girl who very lightly "took a fancy" for a man, a girl who was easily attracted. . . . Some analogy was worrying her, something like it that had happened before, something she had read perhaps. . . . What could it be ? Why could she not remember ?

Great heaven ! the girl at the public ball, the girl who had let a man kiss her for sport ! "That sort !" . . .

Oh, no, no, there was no likeness, none, no analogy, no possible comparison. She, with her pride, and refinement, and high-flown romantic

romantic idealism in her theory that anything real was better than that futile fingering of edged tools. . . . And that wild-haired, cheap tawdriness. . . .

She writhed in restless, rebellious shame, her hands covered her face, where the soft rosiness was turning to thick suffusing scarlet. . . . After all, if any one had seen, it must have looked quite the same, quite, quite the same.

The thought was intolerable. What was she to do? How get some denial of this sickening suspicion. Tell her sister, ask her what she thought? Ah, no, no; now she could never tell . . . and, in the glass, it seemed to her that her eyes looked bold and glittering, and her hair, with its carefully followed outlines and burnished softly-curving richness, appeared shapeless, unkempt, unconsidered . . . Her ball-gown! she tore it from the box where it lay in its fragrant mistiness . . . it was disgraceful, it was immodest almost, she would never wear it again, never dance again, never see that man again. . . .

And as she stood before the glass, with passionate quivering lips, and eyes burning with stinging unfallen tears, the strange delicious thrill stole through her once more, the roseate flickers glowed on her cheek, the kiss seemed to touch her once more with its lingering pressure. . . . Ah, surely there was a point of view, surely there was a difference?

She tasted in that moment something of the weakness of womanhood—its pitiful groping artificiality, its keen passionate realness.

II—Lucille

I CAN hardly expect you to understand me, I fear—for, if the truth be told, I understand myself not at all ; and of Lucille, my comprehension is, at best, just not misapprehension : though of that, even, I feel at times uncertain enough.

Well, after this morning, I suppose I need not think about it any more. Need not ! *must* not would express it better : the last word, so far as I am concerned in it, has been said ; the curtain has rung down upon the little comedy-tragedy that I had (I might say) written, or, at any rate, conceived, entirely by and for myself ; and it has left me, the author, in a puzzlement that is, to treat it lightly, extremely disconcerting. I can't help having the preposterous feeling that it is partly my fault that it has ended so, and of course, you know, it isn't, couldn't be !

If we *will* take our drama in real life, we must not expect the unexpected, we must—strenuously—remember that we are author and audience both, that we see the thing from the inside, that we must be prepared for things actually happening, just as they seem to be going to happen.

I suppose I thought I had thus reasoned it all out, but I see now that my vision was irrevocably warped, that, I was looking out, with a playgoer's certainty of anticipation, for the unprepared—for the unexpected. . . . But (I meant to have said sooner) it occurs to me that, if I put it into words for you, if I reduce it, so to speak, to black and white, we may contrive between us to come to some sort of an understanding about it, to unravel at least one or two of the threads, to get, in short, an approximate idea of that slender humorous enigma whom we used to call Lucille Silverdale.

So

• So now, if you are not alarmed at, repelled by, the prospect of a riddle, a puzzle—oh, but a very charming puzzle—in brown hair and hazel eyes and sensitive contours . . . ?

Mrs. Silverdale, if she did not openly bemoan her fate, yet insinuated tolerably plainly her resentment at the trick which nature had played upon her ; and, far from in sympathy though I felt with her, I could not deny that, from her point of view, there might be an excuse for her attitude. Her attitude? But, in truth, that is hardly the word ; it was more a resigned recognition that there was no possible attitude to be taken up, a kind of mental huddle, a backboneless disapproval, an appallingly silent silence.

From the culprit herself, little aggression could be complained of ; Lucille was, perhaps, as much ashamed of her inconvenience, her *inconvenance*, as were the most robust-minded of her family ; but (it seemed to me) this very modesty, this very agreement with their envisagement of the situation, did but add an irritation the more to her personality.

Strange enough it was, too ; one is used to see it taken so differently, that perfunctory law whereby the ages free themselves from the muffling oblivion of mankind—that poking, freakish finger that heredity sticks in our eyes, as we peer anxiously to see if the veil be decorously thrown over all. The tears it brings—that mocking inexorable finger—are not always of those that purify our mental vision ; and of the Silverdales' sight, so far as that concerned itself with this slender, humorous maiden, it had made miniature havoc.

That, after all these dear mediocre centuries, he should re-assert himself—that ancestor, who in the days of Herrick and Suckling had held his own wittily, gloriously, with the best of them ! One might have hoped that decades upon decades of ignoring,
of

of snubbing, would have quelled his ghostly essence, would have taught his undying part that at any rate it was not wanted among the posterity of his race. But (and the situation really had its pathetic side) here it was, with the *flair* of these uncanny insubstantialities, finding a welcome at last (though not perhaps of the most rapturous) in the great—great—oh, *je vous le donne en mille!*—in the thousandth great-niece, Lucille Silverdale, daughter and sister of, in abstract phrase, the Healthy Commonplace of the British Nation. It was rare enough, as I said—that shrinking from, that deprecation of, their sole title to distinction; one longed to trace it back to its source, to discover from what veil *that* impish finger had darted, whether, to add a quaintness the more, he, the wit, the sweet singer of that honeyed age, had been as unwelcome to his family circle as she, the somewhat unwilling inheritor of his genius, was to hers. But of that bygone blazon upon the Silverdale 'scutcheon, it would have been ill-advised, perilous to speak; to Lucille even the subject was painful, and in the most impracticable sort of way.

She did say to me once, in a moment of acute dejection, that in any other family she would probably have been the idol, insufferably thrust for worship upon every new-comer. "But as it is," she finished sadly, though with her unquenchable twinkle, "I am the skeleton, rattling my impossible bones, not in a nice musty hiding-place of my own, but in the comfortable, general family-cupboard, which they can't open without seeing me. And they have to open it every day—before visitors, too!"

If I laughed somewhat oppressively at her analogy, I daresay she divined part of the reason, and didn't wonder that her amazing comicality should have filled my eyes with tears. . . .

Well, skeleton or idol, she was sufficiently lonely. They were all so rudely healthy-minded, so full of the working-out of their
rosy-

rosy-cheeked conception of the *joie de vivre* (if it set one wondering and shuddering, that was one's own concern), so insistent in exuberance and jollity, that it was no marvel if they had little time, or inclination to make it, for a dreamer of dreams, a seer of visions, a hearer of the music of the spheres. Not that any of those would have been their definition of Lucille: to them, she was a sentimentalist, a "mooney." Yet, apart from the unnaturalnesses into which she would pathetically force herself, she had her soft appealing wildnesses, her gay roguish outbreaks, her bright apologetic materialnesses. . . .

Seeing it written there—*apologetic*—it comes to me with a flash of annoyed divination that Lucille was an incarnate apology. . . . I knew we should arrive at something, you and I; and I am proved right before I have really posed you my enigma. We are coming to it now: Why could she not have had the courage of her genius? I'm sure we see it often enough, oftener than enough, perhaps—the cocksure type of young man or woman, who has the courage of his or her talent. The courage! The brazenness, more aptly; don't we know them? and they are clever—oh, clever! Then why couldn't she be something like them, instead of being one desperate, appealing clutch at the commonplace? She would do violence to her most delicate feelings, and look absolutely complacent over it. Sometimes it made me swear, sometimes—for it had its humorous side, of course—it wholly amused me.

Haven't I heard her twanging a banjo, and singing, in that ethereal voice of hers, the last banalities? Haven't I seen her playing at hockey? Seen her! the smile she wore, the nervous conciliatory smile; the runs she took—of all futilities; the hits she made, or didn't make! Lucille's hockey was a triumph of failure. And she *would* say she liked it, afterwards: it was hard,
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then, to repress one's ironic impulse—one felt that she deserved something. . . . But it wasn't at all that I found it a degradation, or even a derogation, for her to play hockey—that wasn't in the least my feeling. It was more an irritated kind of pity for her fatuity, her lack of humour.

Yet with humour she was otherwise fully equipped; her eyes caught your flying sparkle, and rayed it off into immensity of fun. Her lips—they almost sparkled, too, so mobile, scarlet. Her very hands dimpled sometimes with laughter of rosy finger-tips, and suggestion. . . . In a mad moment, you might have imagined that her feet twinkled, too, in their small jewelled slippers, enjoying the joke like the rest! . . .

And, after a scintillation like that, the girl would do or say something so irritating, so painfully, insistently, commonplace. . . . It was incomprehensible, that attitude of hers: she was, as I have told you, my Sphinx of every-day life.

An instance? Oh, as to that, I could overwhelm you with instances. . . . Well, to take the first that occurs . . . and, indeed, it is typical enough, I suppose, for my purpose. . . .

I met them down the river one afternoon of last summer—all of them, Mrs. Silverdale, Mamie, Bella, Lucille, and, I think, one or two vague, familiar young men. Already I had divined that one of these last (I could barely distinguish one from the other) admired Lucille, and plumed himself hugely upon his good taste, which, to him, indeed, one could imagine, reflected itself almost as bad taste—the sort of bad taste that one implies in “caviare to the general”—with a perfect understanding of the difficulties of caviare.

This mental attitude of Lucille's admirer (I think his name was Willie Ruthven) produced in his demeanour a mingling of patronage, awe, and flippancy that formed an amazing whole. If
it

it sometimes made me long to kick him, that was perhaps an excess of my feeling of championship for the lovely duckling of this complacently plain family . . . or perhaps it was that her gentle graciousness towards him seemed to me part of that irritating *apology* of hers. . . .

To-day, for example, she was sitting apart from the rest, learning, with his assistance, a banjo-atrocity of the newest, and assuming for histrionic completeness a parody of the vilest parody on speech :

“What I loiked about that party wos,
They wos all of 'em so refoined.”

She was chanting in that silvery thread of hers, while he held the music-sheet before her. And that was Lucille Silverdale ! the “L. S.” of *A Trial of Flight*, that exquisite little sheaf of poems which, like fairy-arrows, had stirred the wings of many a shy emotion in our critical hearts—we of *The Appreciator*, most modern of modernities, most *connaissant* of connoisseurs ! It was—well, it was ridiculous, of course, but wasn't it painful, too, to see a genius so belittle the gift of the most high gods ?—wasn't it almost wicked, blasphemous ?

They were encamped in a mist of greenness, their boat fastened to the long bough of a willow that pushed into the water ; it made an ideal nook for happy lovers, and I wondered hotly if it realised its present indignity, as, eagerly invited by the rest, I drew in my canoe to their hiding-place. I hardly looked at Lucille and her Companion of the Banjo, nor did she say anything by way of welcome ; she was, I gathered, too deeply absorbed in her musical studies. I hardly looked at her—but I saw her, more clearly than I saw any of the others : a slender, hazel-eyed incarnation of fragrant coolness, lying there, in white and yellow, among her gleaming blue-green cushions, while the sunbeams glinted off every

every part of the silver and polished wood of her banjo, and her pretty fingers, too, caught the rays on their rings and their rosy opalescent nail-tips. I could have shaken her where she lay : was she enjoying herself, did she like it . . . ?

"Now, Miss Silverdale, you forgot your accent there !" corrected Willie Ruthven, in tones that subdued themselves to a growling tenderness—more could not be demanded of his gruff organ—and even while I inwardly blustered, I felt the humour of the moment steal over me irresistibly. *Modern love-making!* Should I do it for *The Appreciator*? Love-making over that blatant ditty to the poetess of *A Trial of Flight*!

But Mamie was claiming my attention.

"Mr. Transfield, are you good at riddles? We have a book of them here—come and help us to guess them, they are such fun !"

Riddles—and a book of them ! . . . Well, I went and listened to these riddles ; of my help in guessing them, one can say little, nor, indeed, was much opportunity for distinction afforded. Like most posers of enigmas, Mamie had but one ambition : to give you the answer. . . .

"And your sister, does she like riddles too ?"

I asked it almost involuntarily, annoyed at their persistent ignoring of her (I don't know whether it was chivalry or—some other feeling, that incensed me so with her exclusion, her isolation . . .); and then, besides, a riddle—even of this kind—must remind me, must so inevitably suggest her to me. . . . I have not guessed that answer, either, and there was no Mamie to tell it me. . . . Perhaps there isn't any? *Dieu sait!* . . .

"Lucille—oh, *Lucille!* She never guesses anything, never even tries or listens ; too much absorbed in intellectual pursuits !"

"For instance?" I queried, eyebrows irresistibly elevated in my

my glance at the couple in the bow . . . I caught her look for an instant . . . it seemed to say something, hope something . . . then her fingers swept over the strings, and once more she studied the Cockney dialect. . . .

"Anything is better than talking to the rest of us," said Mrs. Silverdale, crossly ; to such good purpose was the girl's martyrdom ! for martyrdom, I was sure of it, her eyes had but now implied. My heart swelled, my cheek burned, as usual. . . .

Of the rest of the day it needs not to tell you ; an epitome of it is there, in the banjo, the cushions, Willie Ruthven, the riddles, and the increasing crossness of the others. For, to add a hopelessness the more, one could more than guess that Mamie desired Willie for herself. . . . Bella, more fortunate, chattered intermittently with the other familiar vagueness ; and in our ears the strings incessantly tinkled, the Cockney dialect futilely twanged, Willie's growling tendernesses reverberated. . . .

To Lucille I never once spoke.

But alone, all the way home, through the dusky gleaming of the water, I seemed to catch again that shy elusive glance, that appealing proud humility . . . that half-divined, wholly-lost answer. . . .

Well, that is all ! I wonder if I thought right ? I wonder if, in these halting half-apprehensions of mine, these unilluminative side-lights, this one meaningless—or significant ?—instance, I have succeeded in gaining, at least, your interest, your sympathy, for my Sphinx of South Kensington ? I wonder if I have helped you to an idea of her, at all corresponding to what she is ? And, more than all, I wonder can you divine (for I cannot) where it is that her weakness lies, what it is that makes her so spoil, so desecrate herself ?

To me she is the riddle—shall I say, of my life? I almost think that, without exaggeration, without affectation, I may call her so, for it is more than unlikely now that I shall ever know the answer. Oh, of course, you may say that she has answered it herself, and in the roughest black-and-white, the worst, the bluntest of type . . . for you saw, no doubt, as I did, that announcement in the morning's paper, that hateful, incredible juxtaposition of names: "Ruthven—Silverdale." . . .

But, you see, I *can't* get that look out of my thoughts, that flutter of the wings of her strange, sweet, mistaken soul . . . and I think, I can't help thinking, that Lucille has written out her *Apology* to the last word. . . .

And, in the name of Reason, what was the meaning of it all? Oh, it sets my heart aching—but it makes me angry too . . . it seems as if—as if—it seems (confound it!) as if I had had something given to me to do—and hadn't done it. . . .

What do *you* think? I hardly hoped you would understand, you know . . . but perhaps you do, and—do *you* think I could have done anything? do *you* feel as if it had been, in any way, my fault? It seems a preposterous, a presumptuous notion . . . but is there anything in it, do you think? . . . I suppose it is useless to expect you to answer.

A Pastoral

By Whitelaw Hamilton



P'tit-Bleu

By Henry Harland

P'TIT-BLEU, poor P'tit-Bleu ! I can't name her without a sigh ; I can't think of her without a kind of heart-ache. Yet, all things considered, I wonder whether hers was really a destiny to sorrow over. True, she has disappeared ; and it is not pleasant to conjecture what she may have to come to, what may have befallen her, in the flesh, since her disappearance. But when I remember those beautiful preceding years of self-abnegation, of great love, and pain, and devotion, I find myself instinctively believing that something good she must have permanently gained ; some treasure that nothing, not the worst imaginable subsequent disaster, can quite have taken from her. It is not pleasant to conjecture what she may have done or suffered in the flesh ; but in the spirit, one may hope, she cannot have gone altogether to the bad, nor fared altogether ill.

In the spirit ! Dear me, there was a time when it would have seemed derisory to speak of the spirit in the same breath with P'tit-Bleu. In the early days of my acquaintance with her, for example, I should have stared if anybody had spoken of her spirit. If anybody had asked me to describe her, I should have said, "She is a captivating little animal, pretty and sprightly, but as soulless—as soulless as a squirrel." Oh, a warm-blooded little animal, good-natured,

natured, quick-witted, full of life and the joy of life ; a delightful little animal to play with, to fondle ; but just a little animal, none the less : a little mass of soft, rosy, jocund, sensual, soulless matter. And in her full red lips, her roguish black eyes, her plump little hands, her trim, tight little figure—in her smile, her laugh—in the toss of her head—in her saucy, slightly swaggering carriage—I fancy you would have read my appreciation justified. No doubt there must have been the spark of a soul smouldering somewhere in her (how, otherwise, account for what happened later on ?), but it was far too tiny a spark to be perceptible to the casual observer. Soul, however, I need hardly add, was the last thing we of the University were accustomed to look for in our feminine companions ; I must not for an instant seem to imply that the lack of a soul in P'tit-Bleu was a subject of mourning with any of us. That a Latin Quarter girl should be soulless was as much a part of the natural order of creation, as that she should be beardless. They were all of them little animals, and P'tit-Bleu diverged from the type principally in this, that where the others, in most instances, were stupid, objectionable little animals, she was a diverting one. She was made of sugar and spice and a hundred nice ingredients, whilst they were made of the dullest, vulgarest clay.

In my own case, P'tit-Bleu was the object, not indeed of love, but of a violent infatuation, at first sight.

At Bullier's, one evening, a chain of students, some twenty linked hand in hand, were chasing her round and round the hall, shouting after her, in rough staccato, something that sounded like, "*Ti-bah ! Ti-bah ! Ti-bah !*"—while she, a sprite-like little form, in a black skirt and a scarlet bodice, fled before them with leaps and bounds, and laughed defiantly.

I hadn't

* I hadn't the vaguest notion what "*Ti-bah ! Ti-bah ! Ti-bah !*" meant, but that laughing face, with the red lips and the roguish eyes, seemed to me immensely fascinating. Among the faces of the other young ladies present—faces of dough, faces of tallow, faces all weariness, staleness, and banality, common, coarse, pointless, insipid faces—it shone like an epigram amongst platitudes, a thing of fire amongst things of dust. I turned to some one near me, and asked who she was.

"It's *P'tit-Bleu*, the dancing-girl. She's going to do a quadrille."

P'tit-Bleu. . . . It's the fashion, you know, in Paris, for the girls who "do quadrilles" to adopt unlikely nicknames: aren't the reigning favourites at this moment *Chapeau-Mou* and *Fifi-la-Galette*? *P'tit-Bleu* had derived hers from that vehement little "wine of the barrier," which, the song declares, "*vous met la tête en feu*." It was the tune of the same song, that, in another minute, I heard the band strike up, in the balcony over our heads. *P'tit-Bleu* came to a standstill in the middle of the floor, where she was joined by three minor dancing-girls, to make two couples. The chain of students closed in a circle round her. And the rest of us thronged behind them, pressing forward, and craning our necks. Then, as the band played, everybody sang, in noisy chorus:

"*P'tit-Bleu, P'tit-Bleu, P'tit-Bleu-eu,*
Ça vous met la tête en feu !
Ça vous ra-ra-ra-ra-ra,
Ça vous ra-ra-ravigotte !"

P'tit-Bleu stood with her hands on her hips, her arms a-kimbo, her head thrown impudently back, her eyes sparkling mischievously, her lips curling in a perpetual play of smiles, while her three subalterns accomplished their tame preliminary measures; and then

P'tit-Bleu

P'tit-Bleu pirouetted forward, and began her own indescribable pas-seul—oh, indescribable for a hundred reasons. She wore scarlet satin slippers, embroidered with black beads, and black silk stockings with scarlet clocks, and simply cataracts and cataracts of white diaphanous frills under her demure black skirt. And she danced with constantly increasing fervour, kicked higher and higher, ever more boldly and more bravely. Presently her hat fell off, and she tossed it from her, calling to the member of the crowd who had the luck to catch it, “Tiens mon chapeau!” And then her waving black hair flowed down her back, and flew loose about her face and shoulders. And the whole time, she laughed—laughed—laughed. With her swift whirlings, her astonishing undulations, and the flashing of the red and black and white, one’s eyes were dazzled. “Ça vous met la tête en feu!” My head burned and reeled, as I watched her, and I thought, “What a delicious, bewitching little creature! What wouldn’t I give to know her!” My head burned, and my heart yearned covetously; but I was a new-comer in the Quarter, and ignorant of its easy etiquette, and terribly young and timid, and I should never have dared to speak to her without a proper introduction. She danced with constantly increasing fervour, faster, faster, furiously fast: till, suddenly—*zip!*—down she slid upon the floor, in the *grand écart*, and sat there (if one may call that posture sitting), smiling calmly up at us, whilst everybody thundered, “Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!”

In an instant, though, she was on her feet again, and had darted out of the circle to the side of the youth who had caught her hat. He offered it to her with a bow, but his pulses were thumping tempestuously, and no doubt she could read his envy in his eyes. Anyhow, all at once, she put her arm through his, and said—oh, thrills and wonders!—“Allons, mon petit, I authorise you to treat me to a bock.”

It

. It seemed as if impossible heavens had opened to me ; yet there she was, clinging to my arm, and drawing me towards the platform under the musicians' gallery, where there are tables for the thirsty. Her little plump white hand lay on my coat-sleeve ; the air was heady with the perfume of her garments ; her roguish black eyes were smiling encouragement into mine ; and her red lips were so near, so near, I had to fight down a wild impulse to stoop and snatch a kiss. She drew me towards the tables, and, on the way, she stopped before a mirror fixed in the wall and rearranged her hair ; while I stood close to her, still holding her hat, and waited, feeling the most exquisite proud swelling of the heart, as if I owned her. Her hair put right, she searched in her pocket and produced a small round ivory box, from which—having unscrewed its cover and handed it to me with a “*Tiens ça*”—she extracted a powder-puff ; and therewith she proceeded gently, daintily, to dust her face and throat, examining the effect critically in the glass the while. In the end she said, “*Voilà, that's better,*” and turned her face to me for corroboration. “*That's better, isn't it ?*” “*It's perfect. But—but you were perfect before, too,*” asseverated I. Oh, what a joy beyond measure thus to be singled out and made her confidant and adviser in these intimate affairs. . . . At our table, leaning back nonchalantly in her chair, as she quaffed her bock and puffed her cigarette, she looked like a bright-eyed, red-lipped bacchante.

I gazed at her in a quite unutterable ecstasy of admiration. My conscience told me that I ought to pay her a compliment upon her dancing ; but I couldn't shape one : my wits were paralysed by my emotions. I could only gaze, and gaze, and revel in my unexpected fortune. At last, however, the truth burst from me in a sort of involuntary gasp.

“*But you are adorable—adorable.*”

She

She gave a quick smile of intelligence, of sympathy, and, with a knowing toss of the head and a provoking glance, suggested, "Je te mets la tête en feu, quoi !"

She, you perceive, was entirely at her ease, mistress of the situation. It is conceivable that she had met neophytes before—that I was by no means to her the unprecedented experience she was to me. At any rate, she understood my agitation and sought to reassure me.

"Don't be afraid; I'll not eat you," she promised.

I, in the depths of my mind, had been meditating what I could not but deem an excessively audacious proposal. Her last speech gave me my cue, and I risked it.

"Perhaps you would like to eat something else? If—if we should go somewhere and sup?"

"Monsieur thinks he will be safer to take precautions," she laughed. "Well—I submit."

So we removed ourselves to the *vestiaire*, where she put on her cloak, and exchanged her slippers for a pair of boots (you can guess, perhaps, who enjoyed the beatific privilege of buttoning them for her); and then we left the Closerie des Lilas, falsely so called, with its flaring gas, its stifling atmosphere, its boisterous merry-makers, and walked arm in arm—only this time it was *my* arm that was within *hers*—down the Boul' Miche, past the Luxembourg gardens, where sweet airs blew in our faces, to the Gambrinus restaurant, in the Rue de Médicis. And there you should have seen P'tit-Bleu devouring *écrevisses*. Whatsoever this young woman's hand found to do, she did it with her might. She attacked her *écrevisses* with the same jubilant abandon with which she had executed her bewildering single-step. She devoured them with an energy, an enthusiasm, a thoroughness, that it was invigorating to witness; smacking her lips, and smiling, and, from time to time,
between

between the mouthfuls, breathing soft little interjections of content. When the last pink shell was emptied, she threw herself back, and sighed, and explained, with delectable unconsciousness, "I was hungry." But at my venturing to protest, "Not really," she broke into mirthful laughter, and added, "At least, I had the appearance." Meanwhile, I must not fail to mention, she had done abundant honour to her share of a bottle of chablis. Don't be horrified—haven't the Germans, who ought to know, a proverb that recommends it? "Wein auf Bier, das rath' ich Dir."

I have said that none of us mourned the absence of a soul in P'tit-Bleu. Nevertheless, as I looked at her to-night, and realised what a bright, joyous, good-humoured little thing she was, how healthy, and natural, and even, in a way, innocent she was, I suddenly felt a curious depression. She was all this, and yet . . . For just a moment, perhaps, I did vaguely mourn the lack of something. Oh, she was well enough for the present; she was joyous, and good-humoured, and innocent in a way; she was young and pretty, and the world smiled upon her. But—for the future? When it occurred to me to think of her future—of what it must almost certainly be like, of what she must almost inevitably become—I confess my jaw dropped and the salt of our banquet lost its savour.

"What's the matter? Why do you look at me like that?" P'tit-Bleu demanded.

So I had to pull myself up and be jolly again. It was not altogether difficult. In the early twenties, troublesome reflections are easily banished, I believe; and I had a lively comrade.

After her crayfish were disposed of, P'tit-Bleu called for coffee and lit a cigarette. And then, between whiffs and sips, she prattled gaily of the subject which, of all subjects, she was probably best qualified to treat, and which assuredly, for the time being, possessed

possessed most interest for her listener—herself. She told me, as it were, the story of her birth, parentage, life, and exploits. It was the simplest story, the commonest story. Her mother (*la recherche de la paternité est interdite*), her mother had died when she was sixteen, and Jeanne (that was her baptismal name, Jeanne Mérois) had gone to work in the shop of a dressmaker, where, sewing hard from eight in the morning till seven at night, with an hour's intermission at noon, she could earn, in good seasons, as much as two-francs-fifty a day. Two and a half francs a day—say twelve shillings a week—in good seasons; and one must eat, and lodge, and clothe one's body, and pay one's laundress, in good seasons and in bad. It scarcely satisfied her aspirations, and she took to dancing. Now she danced three nights a week at Bullier's, and during the day gave lessons in her art to a score of pupils, by which means she contrived to keep the wolf at a respectful distance from her door. "Tiens, here's my card," she concluded, and handed me an oblong bit of pasteboard, on which was printed, "P'tit-Bleu, Professeur de Danse, 22, Rue Monsieur le Prince."

"Et tu n'as pas d'amoureux?" questioned I.

She flashed a look upon me that was quite inexpressibly arch, and responded instantly, with the charmingest little pout, "But yes—since I'm supping with him."

During the winter that followed, P'tit-Bleu and I supped together rather frequently. She was a mere little animal, she had no soul; but she was the nicest little animal, and she had instincts. She was more than good-natured, she was kind-hearted; and, according to her unconventional standards, she was conscientious. It would have amused and touched you, for example, if you had been taking her about, to notice her intense solicitude lest you should conduct her entertainment upon a scale too lavish, her deprecating.

deprecating frowns, her expostulations, her restraining hand laid on your arm. And the ordinary run of Latin Quarter girls derive an incommunicable rapture from seeing their cavaliers wantonly, purposelessly prodigal. With her own funds, on the contrary, P'tit-Bleu was free-handed to a fault: Mimi and Zizette knew whom to go to, when they were hard-up. Neither did she confine her benefactions to gifts of money, nor limit their operation to her particular sex. More than one impecunious student owed it to her skilful needle that his clothes were whole, and his linen maintained in a habitable state. "Fie, Chalks! Your coat is torn, there are three buttons off your waistcoat, and your cuffs are frayed to a point that is disgraceful. I'll come round to-morrow afternoon, and mend them for you." And when poor Berthe Dumours was turned out of the hospital, in the dead of winter, half-cured, and without a penny in her purse, who took her in, and nursed her, and provided for her during her convalescence?

Oh, she was a good little thing. "P'tit-Bleu's all right. There's nothing the matter with P'tit-Bleu," was Chalks's method of phrasing it.

At the same time, she could be trying, she could be exasperating. And she had a temper—a temper. What she made me suffer in the way of jealousy, during that winter, it would be gruesome to recount. She enjoyed an exceeding great popularity in the Quarter; she was much run after. It were futile to pretend that she hadn't her caprices. And she held herself free as air. She would call no man master. You might take what she would give, and welcome; but you must claim nothing as your due. You mustn't assume airs of proprietorship; you mustn't presume upon the fact that she was supping with you to-night, to complain if she should sup to-morrow with another. Her concession of a privilege did not by any means imply that it was exclusive. She

would endure no exactions, no control or interference, no surveillance, above all, no reproaches. Mercy, how angry she would become* if I ventured any, how hoighty-toighty and unapproachable.

"You imagine that I am your property? Did you invent me? One would say you held a Government patent. All rights reserved! Thank you. You fancy perhaps that Paris is Constantinople? Ah, mais non!"

She had a temper and a flow of language. There were points you couldn't touch without precipitating hail and lightning.

Thus my winter was far from a tranquil one, and before it was half over I had three grey hairs. Honey and wormwood, happiness and heartburn, reconciliations and frantic little tiffs, carried us blithely on to Mi-Carême, when things reached a crisis. . . .

Mi-Carême fell midway in March that year: a velvety, sweet, sunlit day, Spring stirring in her sleep. P'tit-Bleu and I had spent the day together, in the crowded, crowded streets. We had visited the Boulevards, of course, to watch the triumph of the Queen of Washerwomen; we had pelted everybody with confetti; and we had been pelted so profusely in return, that there were confetti in our boots, in our pockets, down our necks, and numberless confetti clung in the black meshes of P'tit-Bleu's hair, like little pink, blue, and yellow stars. But all day long something in P'tit-Bleu's manner, something in her voice, her smile, her carriage, had obscurely troubled me; something not easy to take hold of, something elusive, unformulable, but disquieting. A certain indefinite aloofness, perhaps; an accentuated independence; as if she were preoccupied with secret thoughts, with intentions, feelings, that she would not let me share.

And

- And then, at night, we went to the Opera Ball.

P'tit-Bleu was dressed as an Odalisque: a tiny round Turkish cap, set jauntily sidewise on her head, a short Turkish jacket, both cap and jacket jingling and glittering with sequins; a long veil of gauze, wreathed like a scarf round her shoulders; then baggy Turkish trousers of blue silk, and scarlet Turkish slippers. Oh, she was worth seeing; I was proud to have her on my arm. Her black crinkling hair, her dancing eyes, her eager face and red smiling mouth—the Sultan himself might have envied me such a houri. And many, in effect, were the envious glances that we encountered, as we made our way into the great brilliantly lighted ball-room, and moved hither and thither amongst the Harlequins and Columbines, the Pierrots, the Toréadors, the Shepherdesses and Vivandières, the countless fantastic masks, by whom the place was peopled. P'tit-Bleu had a *loup* of black velvet, which sometimes she wore, and sometimes gave to me to carry for her. I don't know when she looked the more dangerous, when she had it on, and her eyes glimmered mysteriously through its peep-holes, or when she had it off.

Many were the envious glances that we encountered, and presently I became aware that one individual was following us about: a horrid, glossy creature, in a dress suit, with a top-hat that was much too shiny, and a huge waxed moustache that he kept twirling invidiously: an undersized, dark, Hebraic-featured man, screamingly "rasta'." Whithersoever we turned, he hovered annoyingly near to us, and ogled P'tit-Bleu under my very beard. This was bad enough; but—do sorrows ever come as single spies?—conceive my emotions, if you please, when, by-and-by, suspicion hardened into certitude that P'tit-Bleu was not merely getting a vainglorious gratification from his attentions, but that she was positively playing up to them, encouraging him to persevere!

She

She chattered—to me, indeed, but at him—with a vivacity there was no misconstruing; laughed noisily, fluttered her fan, flirted her veil, donned and doffed her loup, and, I daresay, when my back was turned, exchanged actual eye-shots with the brute. . . . In due time quadrilles were organised, and P'tit-Bleu led a set. The glossy interloper was one of the admiring circle that surrounded her. Ugh! his complacent, insinuating smile, the conquering air with which he twirled his moustachios! And P'tit-Bleu. . . . When, at the finish, she sprang up, after her *grand écart*, what do you suppose she did? . . . The brazen little minx, instead of rejoining *me*, slipped her arm through *his*, and went tripping off with him to the supper-room.

Oh, the night I passed, the night of anguish! The visions that tortured me, as I tramped my floor! The delirious revenges that I plotted, and gloated over in anticipation! She had left me—the mockery of it!—she had left me her loup, her little black velvet loup, with its empty eye-holes, and its horribly reminiscent smell. Everything P'tit-Bleu owned was scented with *peau-d'Espagne*. I wreaked my fury upon that loup, I promise you. I smote it with my palm, I ground it under my heel, I tore it limb from limb, I called it all manner of abusive names. Early in the morning I was at P'tit-Bleu's house; but the concierge grunted, "*Pas rentrée.*" Oh, the coals thereof are coals of fire. I returned to her house a dozen times that day, and at length, towards night-fall, found her in. We had a stormy session, but, of course, the last word of it was hers: still, for all slips, she was one of Eve's family. Of course she justified herself, and put me in the wrong. I went away, vowing I would never, never, never see her again. "*Va! Ça m'est bien égal,*" she capped the climax by calling after me. Oh, youth! Oh, storm and stress! And to think that one lives to laugh at its memory.

For

• For the rest of that season, P'tit-Bleu and I remained at daggers drawn. In June I left town for the summer ; and then one thing and another happened, and kept me away till after Christmas.

When I got back, amongst the many pieces of news that I found waiting for me, there was one that affected P'tit-Bleu.

"P'tit-Bleu," I was told, "is 'collée' with an Englishman—but a grey-beard, mon cher—a gaga—an Englishman old enough to be her grandfather."

A stolid, implicit cynicism, I must warn you, was the mode of the Quarter. The student who did not wish to be contemned for a sentimentalist, dared never hesitate to believe an evil report, nor to put the worst possible construction upon all human actions. Therefore, when I was apprised by common rumour that during the dead season P'tit-Bleu (for considerations fiscal, *bien entendu*) had gone to live "collée" with an Englishman old enough to be her grandfather—though, as it turned out, the story was the sheerest fabrication—it never entered my head to doubt it.

At the same time, I confess, I could not quite share the humour of my compeers, who regarded the circumstance as a stupendous joke. On the contrary, I was shocked and sickened. I shouldn't have imagined her capable of that. She was a mere little animal ; she had no soul ; she was bound, in the nature of things, to go from bad to worse, as I had permitted myself, indeed, to admonish her, in the last conversation we had had. "Mark my words, you will go from bad to worse." But I had thought her such a nice little animal ; in my secret heart, I had hoped that her progress would be slow—even, faintly, that Providence might let something happen to arrest it, to divert it. And now. . . . !

As a matter of fact, Providence *had* let something happen to divert it ; and that something was this very relation of hers with

an old Englishman, in which the scandal-lovers of the Latin Quarter were determined to see neither more nor less than a mercenary "collage." The diversion in question, however, was an extremely gradual process. As yet, it is pretty certain, P'tit-Bleu herself had never so much as dreamed that any diversion was impending.

But she knew that her relation with the Englishman was an innocent relation ; and of its innocence, I am glad to be able to record, she succeeded in convincing one, at least, of her friends, tolerably early in the game. In the teeth of my opposition, and at the expense of her own pride, she forced an explanation, which, I am glad to say, convinced me.

I had just passed her and her Englishman in the street. They were crossing the Boulevard St. Michel, and she was hanging on his arm, looking up into his face, and laughing. She wore a broad-brimmed black hat, with a red ribbon in it, and a knot of red ribbon at her throat ; there was a lovely suggestion of the same colour in her cheeks ; and never had her eyes gleamed with sincerer fun.

I assure you, the sensation this spectacle afforded me amounted to a physical pain—the disgust, the anger. If she could laugh like that, how little could she feel her position ! The hardened shamelessness of it !

Turning from her to her companion, I own I was surprised and puzzled. He was a tall, spare old man, not a grey-beard, but a white-beard, and he had thin snow-white hair. He was dressed neatly indeed, but the very reverse of sumptuously. His black overcoat was threadbare, his carefully polished boots were patched. Yet, everybody averred, it was his affluence that had attracted her ; she had taken up with him during the dead season, because she had been "à sec." A detail that did nothing to relieve my perplexity

perplexity was the character of his face. Instead of the florid concupiscent face, with coarse lips and fiery eye-balls, I had instinctively expected, I saw a thin, pale face, with mild, melancholy eyes, a gentle face, a refined face, rather a weak face, certainly the very last face the situation called for. He *was* a beast of course, but he didn't look like a beast. He looked like a gentleman, a broken-down, forlorn old gentleman, singularly astray from his proper orbit.

They were crossing the Boulevard St. Michel as I was leaving the Café Vachette; and at the corner of the Rue des Ecoles we came front to front. P'tit-Bleu glanced up; her eyes brightened, she gave a little start, and was plainly for stopping to shake hands. I cut her dead. . . .

I cut her dead, and held my course serenely down the Boulevard—though I'm not sure my heart wasn't pounding. But I could lay as unction to my soul the consciousness of having done the appropriate thing, of having marked my righteous indignation.

In a minute, however, I heard the pat-pat of rapid footsteps on the pavement behind me, and my name being called. I hurried on, careful not to turn my head. But, at Cluny, P'tit-Bleu arrived abreast of me.

"I want to speak to you," she gasped, out of breath from running.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Will you tell me why you cut me like that just now?"

"If you don't know, I doubt if I could make you understand," I answered, with an air of imperial disdain.

"You bear me a grudge, hein? For what I did last March? Well, then, you are right. There. I was abominable. But I have been sorry, and I ask your pardon. Now will you let bygones be bygones? Will you forgive me?"

"Oh,"

"Oh," I said, "don't try to play the simpleton with me. You are perfectly well aware that isn't why I cut you."

"But why, then?" cried she, admirably counterfeiting (as I took for granted) a look and accent of bewilderment.

I walked on without speaking. She kept beside me.

"But why, then? If it isn't that, what is it?"

"Oh, bah!"

"I insist upon your telling me. Tell me."

"Very good, then. I don't care to know a girl who lives 'collée' with a gaga," I said, brutally.

P'tit-Bleu flushed suddenly, and faced me with blazing eyes.

"Comment! You believe that?" she cried.

"Pooh!" said I.

"Oh, mais non, mais non, mais non, alors! You don't believe that?"

"You pay me a poor compliment. Why should you expect me to be ignorant of a thing the whole Quarter knows?"

"Oh, the whole Quarter! What does that matter to me, your Quarter? Those nasty little students! C'est de la crasse, quoi! They may believe—they may say—what they like. Oh, ça m'est bien égal!" with a shake of the head and a skyward gesture. "But you—but my friends! Am I that sort of girl? Answer."

"There's only one sort of girl in the precincts of this University," declared her disenchanted interlocutor. "You're all of one pattern. The man's an ass who expects any good from any of you. Don't pose as better than the others. You're all a—un tas de saletés. I'm sick and tired of the whole sordid, squalid lot of you. I should be greatly obliged, now, if you would have the kindness to leave me. Go back to your gaga. He'll be impatient waiting."

That speech, I fancied, would rid me of her. But no.

"You

"You are trying to make me angry, aren't you? But I refuse to leave you till you have admitted that you are wrong," she persisted. "It's an outrageous slander. Monsieur Long (that is his name, Monsieur Long), he lives in the same house with me, on the same landing; et voilà tout. Dame! Can I prevent him? Am I the landlord? And, for that, they say I'm 'collée' with him. I don't care what they say. But you! I swear to you it is an infamous lie. Will you come home with me now, and see?"

"Oh, that's mere quibbling. You go with him everywhere, you dine with him, you are never seen without him."

"Dieu de Dieu!" wailed P'tit-Bleu. "How shall I convince you? He is my neighbour. Is it forbidden to know one's neighbours? I swear to you, I give you my word of honour, it is nothing else. How to make you believe me?"

"Well, my dear," said I, "if you wish me to believe you, break with him. Chuck him up. Drop his acquaintance. Nobody in his senses will believe you so long as you go trapesing about the Quarter with him."

"Oh, but no," she cried, "I can't drop his acquaintance."

"Ah, there it is," cried I.

"There are reasons. There are reasons why I can't, why I mustn't."

"I thought so."

"Ah, voyons!" she broke out, losing patience. "Will you not believe my word of honour? Will you force me to tell you things that don't concern you—that I have no right to tell? Well, then, listen. I cannot drop his acquaintance, because—this is a secret—he would die of shame if he thought I had betrayed it—you will never breathe it to a soul—because I have discovered that he has a—a vice, a weakness. No—but listen. He is an Englishman,

Englishman, a painter. Oh, a painter of great talent ; a painter who has exposed at the Salon—quoi ! A painter who is known in his country. On a même parlé de lui dans les journaux ; voilà. But look. He has a vice. He has half ruined, half killed himself with a drug. Yes—opium. Oh, but wait, wait. I will tell you. He came to live in our house last July, in the room opposite mine. When we met, on the landing, in the staircase, he took off his hat, and we passed the bonjour. Oh, he is a gentleman ; he has been well brought up. From that we arrived at speaking together a little, and then at visiting. It was the dead season, I had no affairs. I would sit in his room in the afternoon, and we would chat. Oh, he is a fine talker. But, though he had canvases, colours, all that is needed for painting, he never painted. He would only talk, talk. I said, ‘But you ought to paint.’ He said always, ‘Yes, I must begin something to-morrow.’ Always to-morrow. And then I discovered what it was. He took opium. He spent all his money for opium. And when he had taken his opium he would not work, he would only talk, talk, talk, and then sleep, sleep. You think that is well—hein ? That a painter of talent should do no work, but spend all his money for a drug, for a poison, and then say ‘To-morrow’ ? You think I could sit still and see him commit these follies under my eyes and say nothing, do nothing ? Ruin his brain, his health, his career, and waste all his money, for that drug ? Oh, mais non. I made him the sermon. I said, ‘You know it is very bad, that which you are doing there.’ I scolded him. I said, ‘But I forbid you to do that—do you understand ? I forbid it.’ I went with him everywhere, I gave him all my time ; and when he would take his drug I would annoy him, I would make a scene, I would shame him. Well, in the end, I have acquired an influence over him. He has submitted

mitted himself to me. He is really trying to break the habit. I keep all his money. I give him his doses. I regulate them, I diminish them. The consequence is, I make him work. I give him one very small dose in the morning to begin the day. Then I will give him no more till he has done so much work. You see? *Tu te figures que je suis sa maîtresse? Je suis plutôt sa nounou—va! Je suis sa caissière.* And he is painting a great picture—you will see. Eh bien, how can I give up his acquaintance? Can I let him relapse, as he would do to-morrow without me, into his bad habit?"

I was walking with long strides, P'tit-Bleu tripping at my elbow; and before her story was finished we had left the Boulevard behind us, and reached the middle of the Pont St. Michel. There, I don't know why, we halted, and stood looking off towards Notre-Dame. The grim grey front of the Cathedral glowed softly amethystine in the afternoon sun, and the sky was infinitely deep and blue above it. One could be intensely conscious of the splendid penetrating beauty of this picture, without, somehow, giving the less attention to what P'tit-Bleu was saying. She talked swiftly, eagerly, with constantly changing, persuasive intonations, with little brief pauses, hesitations, with many gestures, with much play of eyes and face. When she had done, I waited a moment. Then, grudgingly, "Well," I began, "if what you tell me is true——"

"*If it is true!*" P'tit-Bleu cried, with sudden fierceness. "Do you dare to say you doubt it?"

And she gazed intently, fiercely, into my eyes, challenging me, as it were, to give her the lie.

Before that gaze my eyes dropped, abashed.

"No—I don't doubt it," I faltered, "I believe you. And—
and allow me to say that you are a——a damned decent little girl."

Poor

Poor-P'tit-Bleu ! How shall I tell you the rest of her story—the story of those long years of love and sacrifice and devotion, and of continual discouragement, disappointment, with his death at the end of them, and her disappearance ?

In the beginning she herself was very far from realising what she had undertaken, what had befallen her. To exercise a little friendly supervision over her neighbour's addiction to opium, to husband his money for him, and spur him on to work—it seemed a mere incident in her life, an affair by the way. But it became her exclusive occupation, her whole life's chief concern. Little by little, one after the other, she put aside all her former interests, thoughts, associations, dropped all her former engagements, to give herself as completely to caring for, guarding, guiding poor old Edward Long, as if she had been a mother, and he her helpless child.

Throughout that first winter, indeed, she continued to dance at Bullier's, continued to instruct her corps of pupils, and continued even occasionally, though much less frequently than of old time, to be seen at the Vachette, or to sup with a friend at the Gambrinus. But from day to day Monsieur Edouard (he had soon ceased to be Monsieur Long, and become Monsieur Edouard) absorbed more and more of her time and attention ; and when the spring came she suddenly burned her ships.

You must understand that she had one pertinacious adversary in her efforts to wean him of his vice. Not an avowed adversary, for he professed the most earnest wish that she might be successful ; but an adversary who was eternally putting spokes in her wheel, all the same. Yes, Monsieur Edouard himself. Never content with the short rations to which she had condemned him, he was perpetually on the watch for a chance to elude her vigilance ; she was perpetually discovering that he had somehow contrived

trived to lay in secret supplies. And every now and again, openly defying her authority, he would go off for a grand debauch. Then her task of reducing his daily portion to a minimum must needs be begun anew. Well, when the spring came, and the Salon opened, where his picture (*her* picture?) had been received and very fairly hung, they went together to the Vernissage. And there he met a whole flock of English folk—artists and critics, who had “just run over for the show, you know”—with whom he was acquainted; and they insisted on carrying him away with them to lunch at the Ambassadeurs.

I, too, had assisted at the Vernissage; and when I left it, I found P'tit-Bleu seated alone under the trees in the Champs-Élysées. She had on a brilliant spring toilette, with a hat and a sunshade. . . . Oh, my dear! It is not to be denied that P'tit-Bleu had the courage of her tastes. But her face was pale, and her lips were drawn down, and her eyes looked strained and anxious.

“What’s the row?” I asked.

And she told me how she had been abandoned—“*plantée là*” was her expression—and of course I invited her to lunch with me. But she scarce relished the repast. “*Pourvu qu’il ne fasse pas de bêtises!*” was her refrain.

She returned rather early to the Rue Monsieur le Prince, to see if he had come home; but he hadn’t. Nor did he come home that night, nor the next day, nor the next. At the week’s end, though, he came: dirty; haggard, tremulous, with red eyes, and nude—yes, nude—of everything save his shirt and trousers! He had borrowed a sovereign from one of his London friends, and when that was gone, he had pledged or sold everything but his shirt and trousers—hat, boots, coat, everything. It was an equally haggard and red-eyed P’tit-Bleu who faced him on his reappearance.

ance. And I've no doubt she gave him a specimen of her eloquence. "You figure to yourself that this sort of thing amuses me, hein? Here are six good days and nights that I haven't been able to sleep or rest."

Explaining the case to me, she said, "Ah, what I suffered! I could never have believed that I cared so much for him. But—what would you?—one attaches oneself, you know. Ah, what I suffered! The anxiety, the terrors!" I expected to hear of him run over in the streets. Well, now, I must make an end of this business. I'm going to take him away. So long as he remains in Paris, where there are chemists who will sell him that filthiness (*cette crasse*) it is hopeless. No sooner do I get my house of cards nicely built up, than—piff!—something happens to knock it over. I am going to take him down into the country, far from any town, far from the railway, where I can guard him better. I know a place, a farm-house, near Villiers-St.-Jacques, where we can get board. He has a little income, which reaches him every three months from England. Oh, very little, but if I am careful of it, it will pay our way. And then—I will make him work."

"Oh, no," I protested. "You're not going to leave the Quarter." And I'm ashamed to acknowledge, I laboured hard to dissuade her. "Think of how we'll miss you. Think of how you'll bore yourself. And anyhow, he's not worth it. And besides, you won't succeed. A man who has an appetite for opium will get it, coûte que coûte. He'd walk twenty miles in bare feet to get it." This was the argument that I repeated in a dozen different paraphrases. You see, I hadn't realised yet that it didn't matter an atom whether she succeeded, or whether he was worth it. He was a mere instrument in the hands of Providence. Let her succeed or let her fail in keeping him from opium: the
important

important thing . . . how shall I put it? This little Undine had risen out of the black waters of the Latin Quarter and attached herself to a mortal. What is it that love gains for Undines?

"Que veux-tu?" cried P'tit-Bleu. "I am fond of him. I can't bear to see him ruining himself. I must do what I can."

And the Quarter said, "Ho-lø! You chaps who didn't believe it was a 'collage'! He-he! What do you say now? She's chucked up everything, to go and live in the country with him."

In August or September I ran down to the farm-house near Villiers-St.-Jacques, and passed a week with them. I found a mightily changed Monsieur Edouard, and a curiously changed P'tit-Bleu, as well. He was fat and rosy, he who had been so thin and white. And she—she was *grave*. Yes, P'tit-Bleu was grave: sober, staid, serious. And her impish, mocking black eyes shone with a strange, serious, calm light.

Monsieur Edouard (with whom my relations had long before this become confidential) drew me apart, and told me he was having an exceedingly bad time of it.

"She's really too absurd, you know. She's a martinet, a tyrant. Opium is to me what tobacco is to you, and does me no more harm. I need it for my work. Oh, in moderation; of course one can be excessive. Yet she refuses to let me have a tenth of my proper quantity. And besides, how utterly senseless it is, keeping me down here in the country. I'm dying of ennui. There's not a person I can have any sort of intellectual sympathy with, for miles in every direction. An artist needs the stimulus of contact with his fellows. It's indispensable. If she'd only let me run up
to

to Paris for a day or two at a time, once a month say. Couldn't you persuade her to let me go back with you? She's the most awful screw, you know. It's the French lower middle class parsimony. I'm never allowed to have twopence in my pocket. Yet whose money is it? Where does it come from? I really can't think why I submit, why I don't break away from her, and follow my own wishes. But the poor little thing is fond of me; she's attached herself to me. I don't know what would become of her if I cast her off. Oh, don't fancy that I don't appreciate her. Her intentions are excellent. But she lacks wisdom, and she enjoys the exercise of power. I wish you'd speak with her."

P'tit-Bleu also drew me apart.

"Please don't call me P'tit-Bleu any more. Call me Jeanne. I have put all that behind me—all that P'tit-Bleu signifies. I hate to think of it, to be reminded of it. I should like to forget it."

When I had promised not to call her P'tit-Bleu any more, she went on, replying to my questions, to tell me of their life.

"Of course, everybody thinks I am his mistress. You can't convince them I'm not. But that's got to be endured. For the rest, all is going well. You see how he is improved. I give him fifteen drops of laudanum, morning, noon, and night. Fifteen drops—it is nothing. I could take it myself, and never know it. And he used to drink off an ounce—an ounce, mon cher—at a time, and then want more at the end of an hour. Yes! Oh, he complains, he complains of everything, he frets, he is not contented. But he has not walked twenty miles in bare feet, as you said he would. And he is working. You will see his pictures."

"And you—how do you pass your time? What do you do?"

"I pose

"I pose for him a good deal. And then I have much sewing to do. I take in sewing for Madame Deschamps, the deputy's wife, to help to make the ends meet. And then I read. Madame Deschamps lends me books."

"And I suppose you're bored to death?"

"Oh, no, I am not bored. I am happy. I never was really happy—dans le temps."

They were living in a very plain way indeed. You know what French farmhouses are apt to be. His whole income was under a hundred pounds a year; and out of that (and the trifle she earned by needlework) his canvases, colours, brushes, frames, had to be paid for, as well as his opium, and their food, clothing, everything. But P'tit-Bleu—Jeanne—with that "lower-middle-class parsimony" of hers, managed somehow. Jeanne! In putting off the name, she had put off also, in great measure, the attributes of P'tit-Bleu; she had become Jeanne in nature. She was grave, she was quiet. She wore the severest black frocks—she made them herself. And I never once noticed the odour of *peau-d'Espagne*, from the beginning to the end of my visit. But—shall I own it? Jeanne was certainly the more estimable of the two women, but shall I own that I found her far less exciting as a comrade than P'tit-Bleu had been? She was good, but she wasn't very lively or very amusing.

P'tit-Bleu, the heroine of Bullier's, that lover of noisy pleasure, of daring toilettes, of risky perfumes, of *écrevisses* and *chablis*, of all the rush and dissipation of the *Boul' Miche* and the *Luxembourg*, quietly settling down into Jeanne of the home-made frocks, in a rough French farmhouse, to a diet of veal and lentils, lentils and veal, seven times a week, and no other pastime in life than the devoted, untiring nursing of an ungrateful old English opium-eater—here was variation under domestication with a vengeance.

And on Sunday . . . P'tit-Bleu went twice to church !

About ten days after my return to Paris, there came a rat-ta-ta-tat at my door, and P'tit-Bleu walked in—pale, with wide eyes. “I don’t know how he has contrived it, but he must have got some money somewhere, and walked to the railway, and come to town. Anyhow, here are three days that he has disappeared. What to do? What to do?” She was in a deplorable state of mind, poor thing, and I scarcely knew how to help her. I proposed that we should take counsel with a Commissary of Police. But when that functionary discovered that she was neither the wife nor daughter of the missing man, he smiled, and remarked, “It is not our business to recover ladies’ protectors for them.” P'tit-Bleu walked the streets in quest of him, all day long and very nearly all night long too, for close upon a fortnight. In the end, she met him on the quays—dazed, half-imbecile, and again nude of everything save his shirt and trousers. So, again, having nicely built up her house of cards—piff!—something had happened to topple it over.

“Let him go to the devil his own way,” said I. “Really, he’s unworthy of your pains.”

“No, I can’t leave him. You see, I’m fond of him,” said she.

He, however, positively refused to return to the country. “The fact is,” he explained, “I ought to go to London. Yes, it will be well for me to pass the winter in London. I should like to have a show there, a one-man show, you know. I dare say I could sell a good many pictures, and get orders for portraits.” So they went to London. In the spring I received a letter from P'tit-Bleu—a letter full of orthographic faults, if you like—but a letter that I treasure. Here’s a translation of it:

“My

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I have hesitated much before taking my pen in hand to write to you. But I have no one else to turn to. We have had a dreadful winter. Owing to my ignorance of the language one speaks in this dirty town, I have not been able to exercise over Monsieur Edouard that supervision of which he has need. In consequence, he has given himself up to the evil habit which you know, as never before. Every penny, every last sou, which he could command, has been spent for that detestable filth. Many times we have passed whole days without eating, no, not the end of a crust. He has no desire to eat when he has had his dose. We are living in a slum of the most disgusting, in the quarter of London they call Soho. Everything we have, save the bare necessary of covering, has been put with the lender-on-pledges. Yesterday I found a piece of one shilling in the street. That, however, I have been forced to dispense for opium, because, when he has had such large quantities, he would die or go mad if suddenly deprived.

"I have addressed myself to his family, but without effect. They refuse to recognise me. Everybody here, of course, figures to himself that I am his mistress. He has two brothers, one of the army, one an advocate. I have besieged them in vain. They say, 'We have done for him all that is possible. We can do no more. He has exhausted our patience. Now that he has gone a step farther, and, in his age, disgraced himself by living with a mistress, as well as besotting himself with opium, we wash our hands of him for good.' And yet, I cannot leave him, because I know, without me, he would kill himself within the month, by his excesses. To his sisters, both of whom are married and ladies of the world, I have appealed with equal results. They refuse to regard me otherwise than as his mistress.

"But I cannot bear to see that great man, with that mind, that talent, doing himself to death. And when he is not under the influence of his drug, who is so great? Who has the wit, the wisdom, the heart, the charm, of Monsieur Edouard? Who can paint like him?

"My

"My dear, as a last resource, I take up my pen to ask you for assistance. If you could see him your heart would be moved. He is so thin, so thin, and his face has become *blue*, yes, blue, like the face of a dead man. Help me to save him from himself. If you can send me a note of five hundred francs, I can pay off our indebtedness here, and bring him back to France, where, in a sane country, far from a town, again I can reduce him to a few drops of laudanum a day, and again see him in health and at work. That which it costs me to make this request of you, I have not the words to tell you. But, at the end of my forces, having no other means, no other support, I confide myself to your well-tried amity.

"I give you a good kiss.

"JEANNE."

If the reading of this letter brought a lump into my throat and something like tears into my eyes—if I hastened to a banker's, and sent P'tit-Bleu the money she asked for, by telegraph—if I reproached her bitterly and sincerely for not having applied to me long before,—I hope you will believe that it wasn't for the sake of Monsieur Edouard.

They established themselves at St.-Etienne, a hamlet on the coast of Normandy, to be further from Paris. Dieppe was their nearest town. They lived at St.-Etienne for nearly three years. But, periodically, when she had got her house of cards nicely built up—piff!—he would walk into Dieppe.

He walked into Dieppe one day in the autumn of 1885, and it took her a week to find him. He was always ill, after one of his grand debauches. This time he was worse than he had ever been before. I can imagine the care with which she nursed him, her anxious watching by his bedside, her prayers, her hope, the blankness when he died.

She came back to Paris, and called three times at my lodgings.

But

But I was in England, and didn't receive the notes she left till nearly six months afterwards. I have never seen her since, never heard from her.

What has become of her? It is not pleasant to conjecture. Of course, after his death, she ought to have died too. But the Angel of this Life,

“Whose care is lest men see too much at once,”

couldn't permit any such satisfying termination. So she has simply disappeared, and, in the flesh, may have come to . . . one would rather not conjecture. All the same, I can't believe that in the spirit she will have made utter shipwreck. I can't believe that nothing permanent was won by those long years of love and pain. Her house of cards was toppled over, as often as she built it up; but perhaps she was all the while building another house, a house not made with hands, a house, a temple, indestructible.

Poor P'tit-Bleu !

Stacking Hay

By William Kennedy



Aubade

By Rosamund Marriott Watson

So late last night I watched with you, and yet
You come to wake me while the dews are grey,
Before the sun is forth upon his way,
Almost as though you feared I might forget.

And still you count, unmoved, importunate,
Each pitiful item in my sorrow's freight—
As lovers all their vows before they part
Over and over recapitulate—
Though well you know I have it all by heart.

O Grief, this little while forbear, refrain
Telling your beads so loud, so soon, again,
Tuning your summons to the blackbird's song.
Here, where the dawn hangs dark in lawn and tree,
Do but a little longer wait for me,
I, who am mindful of you all day long.

A Girl's Head

By Harrington Mann.



Dies Iræ

By Kenneth Grahame

THOSE memorable days that move in procession, their heads just out of the mist of years long dead—the most of them are full-eyed as the dandelion that from dawn to shade has steeped itself in sunlight. Here and there in their ranks, however, moves a forlorn one who is blind—blind in the sense of the dulled window-pane on which the pelting raindrops have mingled and run down, obscuring sunshine and the circling birds, happy fields and storied garden; blind with the spatter of a misery uncomprehended, unanalysed, only felt as something corporeal in its buffeting effects.

Martha began it; and yet Martha was not really to blame. Indeed, that was half the trouble of it—no solid person stood full in view, to be blamed and to make atonement. There was only a wretched, impalpable condition to deal with. Breakfast was just over; the sun was summoning us, imperious as a herald with clamour of trumpet; I ran upstairs to her with a broken bootlace in my hand, and there she was, crying in a corner, her head in her apron. Nothing could be got from her but the same dismal succession of sobs that would not have done, that struck and hurt like a physical beating; and meanwhile the sun was getting impatient, and I wanted my bootlace.

Enquiry

Enquiry below stairs revealed the cause. Martha's brother was dead, it seemed—her sailor brother Billy ; drowned in one of those strange far-off seas it was our dream to navigate one day. We had known Billy well, and appreciated him. When an approaching visit of Billy to his sister had been announced, we had counted the days to it. When his cheery voice was at last heard in the kitchen and we had descended with shouts, first of all he had to exhibit his tattooed arms, always a subject for fresh delight and envy and awe ; then he was called upon for tricks, jugglings, and strange, fearful gymnastics ; and lastly came yarns, and more yarns, and yarns till bedtime. There had never been any one like Billy in his own particular sphere ; and now he was drowned, they said, and Martha was miserable, and—and I couldn't get a new bootlace. They told me that Billy would never come back any more, and I stared out of the window at the sun which came back, right enough, every day, and their news conveyed nothing whatever to me. Martha's sorrow hit home a little, but only because the actual sight and sound of it gave me a dull, bad sort of pain low down inside—a pain not to be actually located. Moreover, I was still wanting my bootlace.

This was a poor sort of a beginning to a day that, so far as outside conditions went, had promised so well. I rigged up a sort of jnymast of a bootlace with a bit of old string, and wandered off to look up the girls, conscious of a jar and a discordance in the scheme of things. The moment I entered the schoolroom something in the air seemed to tell me that here, too, matters were strained and awry. Selina was staring listlessly out of the window, one foot curled round her leg. When I spoke to her she jerked a shoulder testily, but did not condescend to the civility of a reply. Charlotte sprawled in a chair absolutely unoccupied, and there were signs of snuffles about her, even at that early hour. It was but a trifling

trifling matter that had caused all this electricity in the atmosphere, and the girls' manner of taking it seemed to me most unreasonable. Within the last few days the time had come round for the despatch of a hamper to Edward at school. Only one hamper a term was permitted him, so its preparation was a sort of blend of revelry and religious ceremony. After the main corpus of the thing had been carefully selected and safely bestowed—the pots of jam, the cake, the sausages, and the apples that filled up corners so nicely—after the last package had been wedged in, the girls had deposited their own private and personal offerings on the top. I forget their precise nature; anyhow, they were nothing of any particular practical use to a boy. But they had involved some contrivance and labour, some skimping of pocket money, and much delightful cloud-building as to the effect on their enraptured recipient. Well, yesterday there had come a terse acknowledgment from Edward, heartily commending the cakes and the jam, stamping the sausages with the seal of Smith major's approval, and finally hinting that, fortified as he now was, nothing more was necessary but a remittance of five shillings in postage stamps to enable him to face the world armed against every buffet of fate. That was all. Never a word or a hint of the personal tributes or of his appreciation of them. To us—to Harold and me, that is—the letter seemed natural and sensible enough. After all, provender was the main thing, and five shillings stood for a complete equipment against the most unexpected turns of luck. The presents were very well in their way—very nice, and so on—but life was a serious matter, and the contest called for cakes and half-crowns to carry it on, not gew-gaws and knitted mittens and the like. The girls, however, in their obstinate way, persisted in taking their own view of the slight. Hence it was that I received my second rebuff of the morning

Somewhat

Somewhat disheartened, I made my way downstairs and out into the sunlight, where I found Harold, playing *Conspirators* by himself on the gravel. He had dug a small hole in the walk and had laid an imaginary train of powder thereto; and, as he sought refuge in the laurels from the inevitable explosion, I heard him murmur: "My God! said the Czar, my plans are frustrated!" It seemed an excellent occasion for being a black puma. Harold liked black pumas, on the whole, as well as any animal we were familiar with. So I launched myself on him, with the appropriate howl, rolling him over on the gravel.

Life may be said to be composed of things that come off and things that don't come off. This thing, unfortunately, was one of the things that didn't come off. From beneath me I heard a shrill cry of, "O, it's my sore knee!" And Harold wriggled himself free from the puma's clutches, bellowing dismally. Now, I honestly didn't know he had a sore knee, and, what's more, he knew I didn't know he had a sore knee. According to boy-ethics, therefore, his attitude was wrong, sore knee or not, and no apology was due from me. I made half-way advances, however, suggesting we should lie in ambush by the edge of the pond and cut off the ducks as they waddled down in simple, unsuspecting single file; then hunt them as bison, flying scattered over the vast prairie. A fascinating pursuit this, and strictly illicit. But Harold would none of my overtures, and retreated to the house wailing with full lungs.

Things were getting simply infernal. I struck out blindly for the open country; and even as I made for the gate a shrill voice from a window bade me keep off the flower-beds. When the gate had swung to behind me with a vicious click I felt better, and after ten minutes along the road it began to grow on me that some radical change was needed, that I was in a blind alley, and
that

that this intolerable state of things must somehow cease. All that I could do I had already done. As well-meaning a fellow as ever stepped was pounding along the road that day, with an exceeding sore heart; one who only wished to live and let live, in touch with his fellows, and appreciating what joys life had to offer. What was wanted now was a complete change of environment. Somewhere in the world, I felt sure, justice and sympathy still resided. There were places called pampas, for instance, that sounded well. League upon league of grass, with just an occasional wild horse, and not a relation within the horizon! To a bruised spirit this seemed a sane and a healing sort of existence. There were other pleasant corners, again, where you dived for pearls and stabbed sharks in the stomach with your big knife. No relations would be likely to come interfering with you when thus blissfully occupied. And yet I did not wish—just yet—to have done with relations entirely. They should be made to feel their position first, to see themselves as they really were, and to wish—when it was too late—that they had behaved more properly.

Of all professions, the army seemed to lend itself the most thoroughly to the scheme. You enlisted, you followed the drum, you marched, fought, and ported arms, under strange skies, through unrecorded years. At last, at long last, your opportunity would come, when the horrors of war were flickering through the quiet country-side where you were cradled and bred, but where the memory of you had long been dim. Folk would run together, clamorous, palsied with fear; and among the terror-stricken groups would figure certain aunts. "What hope is left us?" they would ask themselves, "save in the clemency of the General, the mysterious, invincible General, of whom men tell such romantic tales?" And the army would march in, and the guns would rattle and leap along the village street, and last of all you—you, the

the General, the fabled hero—you would enter, on your coal-black charger, your pale set face seamed by an interesting sabre-cut. And then—but every boy has rehearsed this familiar piece a score of times. You are magnanimous, in fine—that goes* without saying ; you have a coal-black horse, and a sabre-cut, and you can afford to be very magnanimous. But all the same you give them a good talking-to.

This pleasant conceit simply ravished my soul for some twenty minutes, and then the old sense of injury began to well up afresh, and to call for new plasters and soothing syrups. This time I took refuge in happy thoughts of the sea. The sea was my real sphere, after all. On the sea, in especial, you could combine distinction with lawlessness, whereas the army seemed to be always weighted by a certain plodding submission to discipline. To be sure, by all accounts, the life was at first a rough one. But just then I wanted to suffer keenly ; I wanted to be a poor devil of a cabin-boy, kicked, beaten, and sworn at—for a time. Perhaps some hint, some inkling of my sufferings might reach their ears. In due course the sloop or felucca would turn up—it always did—the rakish-looking craft, black of hull, low in the water, and bristling with guns ; the jolly Roger flapping overhead, and myself for sole commander. By and bye, as usually happened, an East Indiaman would come sailing along full of relations—not a necessary relation would be missing. And the crew should walk the plank, and the captain should dance from his own yard-arm, and then I would take the passengers in hand—that miserable group of well-known figures cowering on the quarter-deck !—and then—and then the same old performance : the air thick with magnanimity. In all the repertory of heroes, none is more truly magnanimous than your pirate chief.

When at last I brought myself back from the future to the
actual

actual present, I found that these delectable visions had helped me over a longer stretch of road than I had imagined ; and I looked around and took my bearings. To the right of me was a long low building of grey stone, new, and yet not smugly so ; new, and yet possessing distinction, marked with a character that did not depend on lichen or on crumbling semi-effacement of moulding and mullion. Strangers might have been puzzled to classify it ; to me, an explorer from earliest years, the place was familiar enough. Most folk called it "The Settlement," others, with quite sufficient conciseness for our neighbourhood, spoke of "them there fellows up by Halliday's" ; others again, with a hint of derision, named them the "monks." This last title I supposed to be intended for satire, and knew to be fatuously wrong. I was thoroughly acquainted with monks—in books—and well knew the cut of their long frocks, their shaven polls, and their fascinating big dogs, with brandy-bottles round their necks, incessantly hauling happy travellers out of the snow. The only dog at the settlement was an Irish terrier, and the good fellows who owned him, and were owned by him, in common, wore clothes of the most nondescript order, and mostly cultivated side-whiskers. I had wandered up there one day, searching (as usual) for something I never found, and had been taken in by them and treated as friend and comrade. They had made me free of their ideal little rooms, full of books and pictures, and clean of the antimacassar taint ; they had shown me their chapel, high, hushed, and faintly scented, beautiful with a strange new beauty born both of what it had and what it had not—that too-familiar dowdiness of common places of worship. They had also fed me in their dining-hall, where a long table stood on trestles plain to view, and all the woodwork was natural, unpainted, healthily scrubbed, and redolent of the forest it came from. I brought away from that visit, and kept

kept by me for many days, a sense of cleanness, of the freshness that pricks the senses—the freshness of cool spring water ; and the large swept spaces of the rooms, the red tiles, and the oaken settles, suggested a comfort that had no connexion with padded upholstery.

On this particular morning I was in much too unsociable a mind for paying friendly calls. Still, something in the aspect of the place harmonised with my humour, and I worked my way round to the back, where the ground, after affording level enough for a kitchen-garden, broke steeply away. Both the word Gothic and the thing itself were still unknown to me ; yet doubtless the architecture of the place, consistent throughout, accounted for its sense of comradeship in my hour of disheartenment. As I mused there, with the low, grey, purposeful-looking building before me, and thought of my pleasant friends within, and what good times they always seemed to be having, and how they larked with the Irish terrier, whose footing was one of a perfect equality, I thought of a certain look in their faces, as if they had a common purpose and a business, and were acting under orders thoroughly recognised and understood. I remembered, too, something that Martha had told me, about these same fellows doing “a power o’ good,” and other hints I had collected vaguely, of renuncements, rules, self-denials, and the like. Thereupon, out of the depths of my morbid soul swam up a new and fascinating idea ; and at once the career of arms seemed over-acted and stale, and piracy, as a profession, flat and unprofitable. This, then, or something like it, should be my vocation and my revenge. A severer line of business, perhaps, such as I had read of ; something that included black bread and a hair-shirt. There should be vows, too—irrevocable, blood-curdling vows ; and an iron grating. This iron grating was the most necessary feature of all, for I intended
that

that on the other side of it my relations should range themselves—I mentally ran over the catalogue, and saw that the whole gang was present, all in their proper places—a sad-eyed row, combined in trifling appeal. “We see our error now,” they would say; “we were always dull dogs, slow to catch—especially in those akin to us—the finer qualities of soul! We misunderstood you, misappreciated you, and we own up to it. And now——” “Alas, my dear friends,” I would strike in here, waving towards them an ascetic hand—one of the emaciated sort, that lets the light shine through at the finger-tips—“Alas, you come too late! This conduct is fitting and meritorious on your part, and indeed I always expected it of you, sooner or later; but the die is cast, and you may go home again and bewail at your leisure this too tardy repentance of yours. For me, I am vowed and dedicated, and my relations henceforth are austerity and holy works. Once a month, should you wish it, it shall be your privilege to come and gaze at me through this very solid grating; but——”

Whack!

A well-aimed clod of garden soil, whizzing just past my ear, starred on a tree-trunk behind, spattering me with dirt. The present came back to me in a flash, and I nimbly took cover behind the tree, realising that the enemy was up and abroad, with ambushes, alarms, and thrilling sallies. It was the gardener's boy, I knew well enough; a red proletariat, who hated me just because I was a gentleman. Hastily picking up a nice sticky clod in one hand, with the other I delicately projected my hat beyond the shelter of the tree-trunk. I had not fought with Redskins all these years for nothing.

As I had expected, another clod, of the first class for size and stickiness, took my poor hat full in the centre. Then, Ajax-like, shouting terribly, I issued from shelter and discharged my ammunition.

ammunition. Woe then for the gardener's boy, who, unprepared, skipping in premature triumph, took the clod full in his stomach ! He, the foolish one, witless on whose side the gods were fighting that day, discharged yet other missiles, wavering and wide of the mark ; for his wind had been taken with the first clod, and he shot wildly, as one already desperate and in flight. I got another clod in at short range ; we clinched on the brow of the hill, and rolled down to the bottom together. When he had shaken himself free and regained his legs, he trotted smartly off in the direction of his mother's cottage ; but over his shoulder he discharged at me both imprecation and deprecation, menace mixed up with an under-current of tears.

But as for me, I made off smartly for the road, my frame tingling, my head high, with never a backward look at the Settlement of suggestive aspect, or at my well-planned future which lay in fragments around it. Life had its jollities, then, life was action, contest, victory ! The present was rosy once more, surprises lurked on every side, and I was beginning to feel villainously hungry.

Just as I gained the road a cart came rattling by, and I rushed for it, caught the chain that hung below, and swung thrillingly between the dizzy wheels, choked and blinded with delicious-smelling dust, the world slipping by me like a streaky ribbon below, till the driver licked at me with his whip, and I had to descend to earth again. Abandoning the beaten track, I then struck homewards through the fields ; not that the way was very much shorter, but rather because on that route one avoided the bridge, and had to splash through the stream and get refreshingly wet. Bridges were made for narrow folk, for people with aims and vocations which compelled abandonment of many of life's highest pleasures. Truly wise men called on each element alike
to

to minister to their joy, and while the touch of sun-bathed air, the fragrance of garden soil, the ductible qualities of mud, and the spark-whirling rapture of playing with fire, had each their special charm, they did not overlook the bliss of getting their feet wet. As I came forth on the common Harold broke out of an adjoining copse and ran to meet me, the morning rain-clouds all blown away from his face. . He had made a new squirrel-stick, it seemed. Made it all himself; melted the lead and everything! I examined the instrument critically, and pronounced it absolutely magnificent. As we passed in at our gate the girls were distantly visible, gardening with a zeal in cheerful contrast to their heartsick lassitude of the morning. "There's bin another letter come to-day," Harold explained, "and the hamper got joggled about on the journey, and the presents worked down into the straw and all over the place. One of 'em turned up inside the cold duck. And that's why they weren't found at first. And Edward said, Thanks awfully!"

I did not see Martha again until we were all re-assembled at teatime, when she seemed red-eyed and strangely silent, neither scolding nor finding fault with anything. Instead, she was very kind and thoughtful with jams and things, feverishly pressing unwonted delicacies on us, who wanted little pressing enough. Then suddenly, when I was busiest, she disappeared; and Charlotte whispered me presently that she had heard her go to her room and lock herself in. This struck me as a funny sort of proceeding.

The Harbour Light

By D. Martin



The Enchanted Stone

By Lewis Hind

THIS is a true account of the Enchanted Stone, and of the strange circumstances by which it came into my possession.

The paper had been running eighteen months, when one November morning, among the manuscripts that arrived by the early post, I found one, written in a queer, square handwriting, and redolent of a pungent Eastern perfume. It was unsigned, but at the foot of the last page stood a symbol of irregular outline, about the size of a two-shilling piece. The surface was wrinkled, like the face of an old woman by Rembrandt, and also bore three dark markings, in appearance somewhat akin to sun-spots, seen through a powerful telescope. This disc was pierced by an arrow an inch long, scrawled over by some mystic letters. The manuscript, which was written in flowery language, began with these words—"Om!! Salutation to the Revered and Sublime White Queen, whose arms encircle the globe," and ended with this cryptic peroration—"I am not inconsiderate, like the grass-eating animals. I will repay. The earth and the mountains may be overthrown, but I, O Queen, will not rest till I regain the Enchanted Stone."

The body of the manuscript contained, so far as I gathered in a hurried

hurried perusal, a pious request that a certain gem which was about to be presented to the Queen by the Raja of Pepperthala, should be restored to the writer, who proclaimed himself the lineal descendant of the rightful owner of the gem. The Raja of Pepperthala, I concluded, was the broken-down ruler of a bankrupt feudatory state in Northern India. Further the communication stated that the writer would call upon me that afternoon at four o'clock.

I was puzzling over this odd manuscript when the tape machine that stands in the corner of my room began to tick. As it was unusual for news to be sent through at such an early hour, I threw down the anonymous effusion, and hastened toward the instrument. The tape coiled from the machine, and I spelled out the following :

“ 10.30 a.m. Prince of Wales has just left Marlborough House to call upon the Raja of Pepperthala, who is staying at Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty's invitation.”

That was a remarkable item of news in itself, to say nothing of the coincidence. Our last Indian visitor, I knew, had lodged in the Gloucester Road. Why then should the Raja of Pepperthala, an insignificant chieftain, whose name was not even mentioned in Griffith's *Indian Princes*, be staying at Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty's invitation ? It being Press day, I had not time to puzzle over the anomaly, so I sent the manuscript and the news item to Mayfair, my friend and sub-editor, who worked in a room at the end of the passage, asking him to investigate the affair and let me know the result before four o'clock. Although Mayfair was but twenty-one years of age, he was like certain of the children of Israel, one in whom there was no blemish, well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, cunning in knowledge, understanding many things,

things, who had easily brought himself into my favour and tender love.

By this time it was eleven o'clock, the hour when the printer began to send down pages to be passed for press. The strain lasted well into the afternoon, and the mysterious manuscript had been quite driven from my mind, when a card was brought to me bearing nothing but a duplication of the symbol that sprawled at the foot of the perfumed article. I looked at the clock. The hands pointed to four.

I told the messenger to show the stranger into the ante-room, and to ask Mr. Mayfair to come to me at once.

"Hush," I whispered when Mayfair appeared. "He's in there," indicating the adjoining chamber. "Will you sit at my desk? Pretend to be writing. Listen attentively, but do not speak unless I address you."

The clock struck four. I threw open the door of the ante-room.

The man who came forward, lightly and noiselessly, with the grace of a free animal, was yellow like a Mongolian, but his features were finely chiselled, and in stature he was tall and slim. He wore a long, frayed frock-coat buttoned high up around his neck. The crown of his head resembled a yellow billiard ball. I have never seen a man with less hair. His eyes were deep-set and piercing, and, like the slight nostrils, and the thin quivering lips, alive with intelligence.

"You have read my words?" he asked eagerly, and in excellent English.

I nodded an affirmative.

"And you will publish my words in your paper?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "We are so crowded. Our space is limited. Besides——"

He

He strode to my side. "I am some judge of character," he remarked, in a tone quite innocent of egoism, speaking as if he were stating an incontrovertible fact. "You believe in the good and wise God?"

"Really," I began.

"Yet," he swept on, "you will hinder the revelation He has promised to mankind."

"Do you refer to me, or to the paper?" I asked gently. It was clear I had to deal with a religious fanatic.

"Yours is a great journal," he continued, ignoring my question. "You are the Editor! You wield power! You are not rich! Procure for me the Enchanted Stone, and I will give you two, three, five thousand pounds."

With that he drew from an outer pocket a bundle of bank notes, and flung them upon the table. They were for £1000 each, and undoubtedly genuine.

"Replace those, please," I said. "This is not a private enquiry office. Now let us understand one another. I gather that a poor old gentleman, the present Raja of Pepperthala, who is now lodging at Buckingham Palace, by Her Majesty's invitation, has in his possession a valuable stone which you assert is your property, you being the lineal descendant of the rightful owners, who centuries past were Rajas of Pepperthala. You also state that this gem was stolen some hundreds of years ago by a Mohammedan chief at the time of the invasion of India; that the said stone has brought nothing but trouble and disaster to its various owners; that the present possessor has in a moment of generosity determined to present this ill-omened and unlucky gem to Her Majesty, and that he has travelled to England for that purpose. Further, you are so anxious to get possession of the gem as to offer me a bribe of £5000 if I succeed in restoring it to you. Now, before I move a
step

step in this matter, I must ask you first to produce documents satisfying me that the stone ever belonged to your ancestors, and, secondly, to show proofs of your own identity; in a word, make it clear to me that you are the lineal descendant of the former Rajas of Pepperthala. For all I know, the stone has been already handed over to Her Majesty, and is at this moment lodged in the Tower with the other Regalia. I'm afraid I could not consent to steal the Crown jewels even for a bribe of £5000."

"To restore, not to steal," he interposed, quickly.

I laughed a little contemptuously at the emendation. His demeanour changed. He drew himself up to his full height, the long lashes fell across his eyes, his head sunk upon his breast, and he cried in a broken voice and with hands upraised: "How long, O Lord, how long? I am as one standing upon the housetops, trying to grasp the stars of heaven."

His dejection was so poignant that my heart softened. "Procure me the proofs," I said, "and I will see what can be done. In the meantime we will insert a paragraph, non-committal, but of a nature that may arouse public interest and, possibly, sympathy."

Having thus delivered myself I threw open the door of the ante-room, as a hint that the interview was ended.

The chamber faced the west. The sky was clear, save for a bank of heavy clouds along the horizon. The fog which hung about the streets was of that wreathy, fantastic character that makes potential mysteries of chimneypots, wayfarers, and telegraph posts. As I threw open the door, a heavy cloud was just rolling away from the setting sun. I paused in admiration—I had almost written adoration—of the spectacle. For one moment the sun glowed like a great angry eye, with a little feathery wing dancing impishly over its surface; then another cloud-bank swept up, like
a puff

The Enchanted Stone

a puff of gun-fire from a distant coast. The good, round light went out, and in its place came gloom and the shadows of night. Then the cloud rolled away, and for a moment the sun shone forth upon the world again in a blaze of good-night splendour.

What happened next was begun and ended in the space of three seconds. A trill of low laughter fell upon my ears; turning swiftly, I observed Mayfair trying, with poor success, to preserve his gravity. Seeking for the cause, I found it in the Yellow Man, who had fallen upon his knees, with long arms raised reverently towards the sun, that glowed full upon his ascetic face and head, which bobbed in unison to a torrent of words, in some unknown tongue, that broke from his lips. It was the back of the man's nodding head that moved Mayfair to mirth. Had he seen his face as I saw it at that moment he would have felt no inclination to laugh—so sad, so profound, was the look of passionate entreaty that illumined his countenance. It moved me strangely, and then, in a flash, my wonder was changed into horror—and I was rushing across the room to where Mayfair sat still laughing, but now in a desperate kind of way.

I caught the Yellow Man's arm as the dagger gleamed downwards in a sharp, swift stroke, and so lessened the force of the blow, but I was not in time to save the boy. Then blood spurted from the wound, and Mayfair fell forward upon his face.

"You devil," I cried, seizing the creature's hand that still gripped the dagger; but he slipped from my grasp like an eel and disappeared from the room, closing the door silently after him. I let him go, for Mayfair had fainted and needed me. His pretty white necktie—he always liked dainty clothing—was stained with blood. I staunched the flow, bound up the wound as well as I knew how, laid him down full length upon the floor, and then considered. At all costs the affair must be hushed up. I

wrote

wrote a note explaining the nature of the injury, then rang the bell, and met the messenger outside the room.

"Take this letter to Doctor Eastern," I said. "Bring him back with you."

Then I locked the door and waited. My fears, I confess, were selfish, but the dread of losing Mayfair was more than I dared contemplate. In a little he moved, raising himself upon one elbow.

"What—where——?"

"Be quiet, there's a dear fellow," I whispered.

"Oh, I remember," he said, trembling at the sight of the red bandages. "I'm peppered, zounds, a dog, a cat, to scratch a man to death! a braggart—how does it go! Oh—h!" He fainted again.

By the time the doctor arrived I had decided upon my course of action. "You know my name," I said. "Well, this gentleman has been stabbed. It was a stupid quarrel. I take all responsibility, you understand. It's an unfortunate business, and I want it to be kept quiet."

The doctor was young and accommodating, and, after an examination of the injury, pronounced it to be nothing more than a flesh-wound.

"Can he be moved?" I asked.

"Oh, yes."

He dressed the wound and left, promising to call in the evening at the address I should send.

In half an hour Mayfair was able to converse. I decided to remove him at once, and, without attracting any particular attention, succeeded in getting him downstairs, and into a cab. I gave the driver the address of my rooms.

"No, no," he whispered, "take me home."

"To

The Enchanted Stone

"To your mother's house?" I asked, in astonishment.

"No, no; take me to my bride."

"Your bride?" I gasped.

"Yes, my bride," he repeated, petulantly, and called to the cabman to drive to the Albert Embankment, opposite Lambeth Palace.

He was very much in earnest, so I let him have his way, and babbled of our next holiday, and green fields, of anything, in fact, that might distract his mind. Arrived at our destination he dismissed the cab, and, clinging to my arm, guided me towards Lambeth pier. Bearing to the right we descended the steps that lead down to the water's edge. A boat was waiting. I pushed off, under his directions, and in another moment collided against a raft. We landed, and picked our steps over the old boats and the refuse of half a century scattered there. I heard the oily lap, lap, of the waves against the raft, but could see little for the fog that hung motionless in the still air—so wet and chill. With each step my companion leant heavier upon my arm. A horrible idea flashed into my mind. By his bride did he—could he mean this unseen river oozing past in the dark like some huge prehistoric reptile. I shuddered at the thought, and at that moment we confronted the outline of a low log-hut at the eastern end of the raft. Warm welcome light streamed from the little window. My companion knocked at the door, which was immediately thrown open by a young girl—pale, work-weary, and wistful, like a Fillipino Lippi Madonna.

"I'm ill, Mary," he said simply.

She gave a little start, and cried, "Oh, my beloved." The voice was not the voice of a gentlewoman.

Then warm arms enfolded him, and he was carried within.

The door closed, and friendship's victim was left alone, with
the

the fog above and fog around, and below the greasy planks sighing and souging as they collided in the movement of the water.

In the hurried journey back to the office, the events of the day pattered through my brain, and the long fingers of Imagination stretched before me, pointing to strange and fantastic developments. I heard nothing, saw nothing as we raced through the lighted streets, except a nimble paper seller who flashed an eager hatchet face through the cab window. I bought one, a halfpenny sheet, I forget which—receiving a contemptuous comment because I demanded the change from my penny. My eye had caught the word *Pepperthala* on the front page.

When I arrived at the office I chipped a dark stain from the woodwork of the chair in which Mayfair had been sitting, and then carefully studied the prospect from the window. The opposite houses were still wrapped in fog. Good! The blood-guiltiness of the Yellow Man remained our secret. No human eye could have penetrated that dense envelope, which had grown still more opaque since sunset; I could not even distinguish the outline of the stone parapet that ran in front of my window, practically making a promenade round the building.

Turning away, the evening paper I had purchased caught my eye. The front page contained half a column about the visit of the Raja of *Pepperthala*. It was invertebrate stuff, all pure conjecture, with an imaginative account of the decay of the State of *Pepperthala*, and a disquisition on the present parlous condition of its Chief. As to the reason of the Raja's visit to England the reporter was silent, but a paragraph and a portrait at the end of the article roused my interest to the meridian.

It was to the effect that the Raja had been accompanied to England by Mr. Edward Kettle, "so well known a few years back
in

in connection with Colonial politics, who is now acting as *cicerone* and interpreter to the Raja of Pepperthala."

Now I knew something about Mr. Kettle—something not quite creditable to that gentleman—in connection with a certain transfer of Government land, which I had kept close in that sanctuary of the memory reserved for the bad deeds of others. My forbearance made me the victim of repeated offers of service from Kettle. The opportunity had now arrived. I determined to go down at once to Buckingham Palace, and claim from him a slight fulfilment of his many promises. I remembered Kettle as a particularly vulgar snob, unprincipled but clever, and always ready with word or blow.

On presentation of my card with the name of the paper engraved upon it, I found no difficulty in obtaining admittance to the Palace. The porter was haughty at first, but I prevailed over him, and he disappeared with my communication up a wide staircase, leaving me to wait in a large room, where the furniture was all covered up in brown holland. In a few minutes he returned, even haughtier than before. Mr. Kettle was dressing for dinner and could not see me. I wrote three words on a card, slipped it into an envelope and induced the Royal emissary to repeat his journey. . . . This time I was more successful. Mr. Kettle would see me, and at once.

The Raja of Pepperthala occupied a suite of rooms on the first floor. The night was too dark for me to locate the apartment into which I was shown, but I imagine it looked out upon the Palace gardens that stretch away to Grosvenor Place. Several minutes passed. I grew impatient. Somebody moved in the next room, then Kettle's voice reached me giving instructions to a servant. "A plague on this man," said I, and without more ado threw open the door that separated us. Mr. Kettle was standing
before

before the fire paring his nails. Oiled hair, curled moustache, liquid eyes, short-putty figure, a velvet collar to his dinner coat; he was the same hopeless, middle-aged dandy—unchanged, unregenerate. I knew my man, and so came to the point at once. "Kettle," I said, "I want to have some conversation with the Raja of Pepperthala, and I should also be much obliged if you would let me have a peep at a certain valuable known to fame as 'the Enchanted Gem.'"

He looked up quickly, smiled in an embarrassed kind of way, and flicked a crumb from his sleeve.

"Such an interview, my dear fellow, is quite *ultra vires*. I have already refused some of the very smartest people in London. As to what you call the Enchanted Gem I don't know what you mean. It's *caviare* to me, quite *caviare*" he repeated, fumbling nervously with a gold toothpick.

I caught him by the arm (he reeked of patchouli) and whispered something in his ear. I was not in a mood to bandy words with the fellow, who rolled his foolish little foreign expressions round his tongue like a bear with a piece of honeycomb. He shrunk away from me, spreading his hands between us. "All right," he stuttered, breaking back to the accent of other days. "Play fair!"

Observing the amusement I made no effort to conceal, he quickly recovered himself.

"What you require is *difficile*," he said sententiously. "The old fellow is mad with rum and disease. Really I daren't present him to a stranger. Stop! I have an idea *bien trouvé*! He is in the next room alone. I'll turn down the gas. You sit here on a line with the door. I open it, inventing an excuse to speak to him. That is your opportunity, *n'est ce pas?* But don't utter a sound. And if he catches sight of you make yourself scarce!"

scarce ! *Comprenez vous ?* He's like a tiger with that confounded gem."

I promised to remain perfectly still. Then he lowered the gas, and cautiously opened the door.

I saw a broadly-built man with dusky face, long matted hair, and a thick neck, upon which the skin folded itself in great ridges. Over his shoulders a blanket was thrown. He was fondling and patting a smooth, oval object, the size and shape of a cocoa-nut, but the colour was the colour of gold. When the door opened he grabbed the casket to his chest, and, by a rapid movement of his broad shoulders, concealed the shining object beneath the blanket. That was all I saw of the Raja of Pepperthala, but I never forgot the sight. His ancestors may, or may not have been, bullies and bastards, but this poor tamed creature had in his time been king of broad lands, with power to save or kill, and in his hands the keys of palaces, and temples, and vaults heaped high with treasure.

Kettle closed the door. He was quite pale.

"You have seen him," he whispered, "and I'm sure you ought to be infernally obliged to me ; and, my boy, you've also seen the case which contains the blessed stone. Oh, don't ask me anything further ! This Desire of the Nations, as they call it, is driving me mad, *absit omen*. I'll just tell you one thing," he said, mysteriously, "and you may repeat it to whoever gets hold of the blooming stone—*caveat emptor*. That's what I say. Good night."

The adventures of the day had given me material for quite a pretty little article. I walked briskly up Constitution Hill, arranging the paragraphs in my mind, thence into Hyde Park, and by the time I had travelled as far as the Marble Arch, and back again to Hyde Park Corner, the article was clamouring to be written.

written. So I hastened down Grosvenor Place, purposing to take the train at Victoria.

The fog had become so much denser during the last hour, that I was quite glad to have the friendly wall of Buckingham Palace Garden as a guide. With my left hand trailing against it, I slowly and cautiously groped my way, till I drew near the spot where Grosvenor Place turns sharply round to the left into Little Grosvenor Place. There an adventure befell me. At this point, where the pavement narrows, I was crouching under the lee of the wall, to remove myself as far as possible from a brilliantly lamped Parcels Post van that came rattling through the fog, when suddenly a man dropped upon me from the top of the wall. He doubled himself up as he fell, alighting gracefully upon my head, enveloping me as if he were an extinguisher, and I a candle. At the same time a metal vessel, escaping from his hands by the violence of the shock, clanged upon the pavement, while a smaller object struck sharply against my foot.

I tumbled incontinently upon the pavement, while my visitor, recovering himself while I was still blinking, picked up the metal vessel, which I observed had burst open, and disappeared into the fog.

For a moment I sat motionless, unhurt, but confused with amazement. The person who had dropped so indecorously over the garden wall was my yellow friend of the afternoon, and the metal object which had burst open as he fell was the case that the Raja of Pepperthala had concealed beneath the blanket a few hours before.

As I was considering the bearings of this new development upon my article there fell upon the hushed air, from the direction of the Palace, a wail, repeated three times, so eerie, so pregnant with despair, that I felt almost as if something had cut into a

tissue of my sensibility. Then I heard shouts in the garden, a dog's deep bay, and a voice crying: "Quick! Here's the ladder."

That narrow slip of pavement, where I sat cross-legged like a Buddha, was clearly no place for me. Mechanically I picked up the object that had struck against my foot, slipped across the road, and was soon out of earshot of the voices.

Upon examination, my find proved to be an oval case made of very hard wood, similar in shape to the Raja of Pepperthala's stolen treasure, but smaller. On pressing a little deflection at the extreme end the case flew open. It contained nothing but an ordinary stone, in size and shape something like a hen's egg. When I arrived home I examined the stone minutely, but although it was unlike other stones one might pick up in Grosvenor Place, I could discover nothing remarkable about its appearance. It bristled all over with little corrugations and spikes. A space of about an inch square had been polished, and on this shining surface I detected three vague nebulous markings; the colour was black, and the thing was moist to the touch.

I wrote the article, and soon after midnight retired to bed, after emptying, according to habit, the contents of my pockets upon a table that stands in the centre of my room. When I awoke, considerably after my usual hour, the sun was shining through the window, and I observed, in the drowsy, semi-conscious way we note things in the first moment of waking, that soon the broad white beam of sunlight which streamed through the window would fall upon the heterogeneous collection of articles that I had thrown upon the table the night before. Then I fell asleep again. When I re-awoke the articles lay full in the glare of the sunshine—knife, keys, match-box, and, towering above them all, the big stone, flanked by its ragged-edged shadow.

I gazed

I gazed sleepily at them, too lazy even to turn my head away, till gradually it dawned upon me that I had been mistaken in supposing that the stone was black. Its colour was red. I rubbed my eyes, and sat up in bed. Yes, the stone was certainly red—a heavy dark red. And yet as I looked it became clear to me that the stone was by no means a dark red. It was a *living red*, the colour of blood. I jumped from my bed, and touched the stone with my fore-finger. It burnt.

I am not a nervous man, but I confess to feeling startled and troubled. Was I going blind? Was I in for a serious illness? I had been working and worrying overmuch of late, and Nature, I knew, sometimes sent her warnings through odd channels. But then why should the stone burn? I pulled myself together, bathed and dressed leisurely, concentrating my mind by a great effort on other subjects. Half an hour passed. I then looked again. The stone stood in the shade, and was quite black—as black as a mourning hat-band.

Could . . . ? Could . . . ? I lifted the stone, it was now cold and moist to the touch, and again placed it in the centre of the beam of light, gazing intently with paper and pencil in my hand to note exactly what happened.

The rays of the sun concentrated themselves upon its surface, and, as the thing warmed, the deep black of its normal condition gave place to a dull red. Presently the red grew into a glow like a November sunset, then it hissed to a white heat, the colour of a furnace fire, and there before me was the thing palpitating and panting as if it were alive. With the point of my penknife I pushed it still further into the light, and even as I looked—*it moved*.

Methodically and carefully I cut two thin strips of paper, and placed them upon the table at either side of the stone. Then I closed

closed my eyes. When I opened them again one of the strips of paper was untouched. The other was gone—burnt. Its charred ends were curled up an inch behind the stone.

What did it mean?—A stone that glowed, and pulsed, and moved when placed in a beam of light. A stone that the sun had power to vivify. What did it mean?

The Sun!! The events of yesterday swept back to me—the Yellow Man—his mysterious words—his anxiety to procure the gem, his adoration of the setting sun. The sun again!!

I pressed my hands to my head. The voice of a paper seller in the streets below struck into my thoughts—"Robbery at Buckingham Palace. Strange Rumours."

I ran to the window. A cab drew up at my door. In another moment, Mayfair, paler than pallor itself, burst, or rather staggered into the room.

"Madman," I cried, "to leave your bed."

With a ripple of laughter he placed his hand upon my shoulder, "I'm the madman am I?" he murmured, gazing at me, his blue eyes shining with merriment and admiration, "and you, what about you? Oh, my friend, my friend! Don't speak. Let me laugh before you explain. You-you-you Napoleon! Oh! Oh! Oh! They're after you," he added. "You haven't heard? The Raja and Kettle were found gagged and bound, and the gentle Kettle accuses you of the robbery—protests you were his only visitor during the evening. It *was* you, wasn't it? Say it was you, do!"

As the words fell from his lips he reeled against me, and would have fallen had I not caught him in my arms. He was so weak, he looked so fragile, the collapse after the excitement of the morning was so complete and so sudden that I determined to keep him under my roof, and after a deal of persuasion I induced him to undress,

undress, and get into bed, where I left him in charge of my housekeeper, promising to telegraph immediately to his wife. I then dropped the stone, not without a shudder, into my pocket, and started for the office. Before I had gone a hundred yards it became clear to me that I must be rid of the thing at any cost. The placard bills of the evening papers blazoned the words "Robbery—Buckingham Palace—Strange Rumours" from every street corner. There would be the very devil to pay if the stone were found in my possession. My head ached with attempts to devise schemes of getting rid of it. The obvious plan was to drop it down a sewer or over Westminster Bridge—back staircase schemes all of them, I decided, and outside consideration.

Restore it to the Raja! I dare not. Who would believe my yarn that the thing had fallen at my feet from the clouds on a foggy night in Grosvenor Place? If only I could hand it to the Yellow Man, and earn the £5000! Impossible. Oh, quite impossible.

As I drew near the office I found the lamps lighted, and the streets enveloped in a fog denser even than that of the previous day. A furtive look played over the hall porter's face, and the messenger boys were beaming with suppressed excitement. When I reached my room I found that every drawer and cupboard had been ransacked. The hall porter, a faithful creature, entered the room without knocking, crept timorously towards me, and whispered in my ear: "'Scuse me, sir, but two men from Scotland Yard have been a searching here. Gone to your house now, sir, and one of them give me the tip, sir, that they would be back here soon."

I thanked him, locked the door, turned down the gas, and threw myself upon the sofa. What on earth was I to do with the stone? Some sort of decision must be arrived at immediately. The room

was

was in semi-darkness. Fog lurked in the corners. The leaping fire threw fantastic reflections upon the window pane. That was the sole illumination.

As I lay there thinking, thinking, a sound came to me through the darkness like a cat scratching upon glass. Raising myself upon my elbow, I looked hard at the window whence the noise proceeded, and as I stared, a face, a thin, ascetic face, yellow, like a Mongolian's, with deep, searching eyes, and a restless mouth, shaped itself out of the surrounding gloom.

For a moment we stared at one another, and then an idea leapt into my mind. Slowly I arose from the sofa, lifted the stone from my coat pocket, and placed it upon the table within a foot from the window.

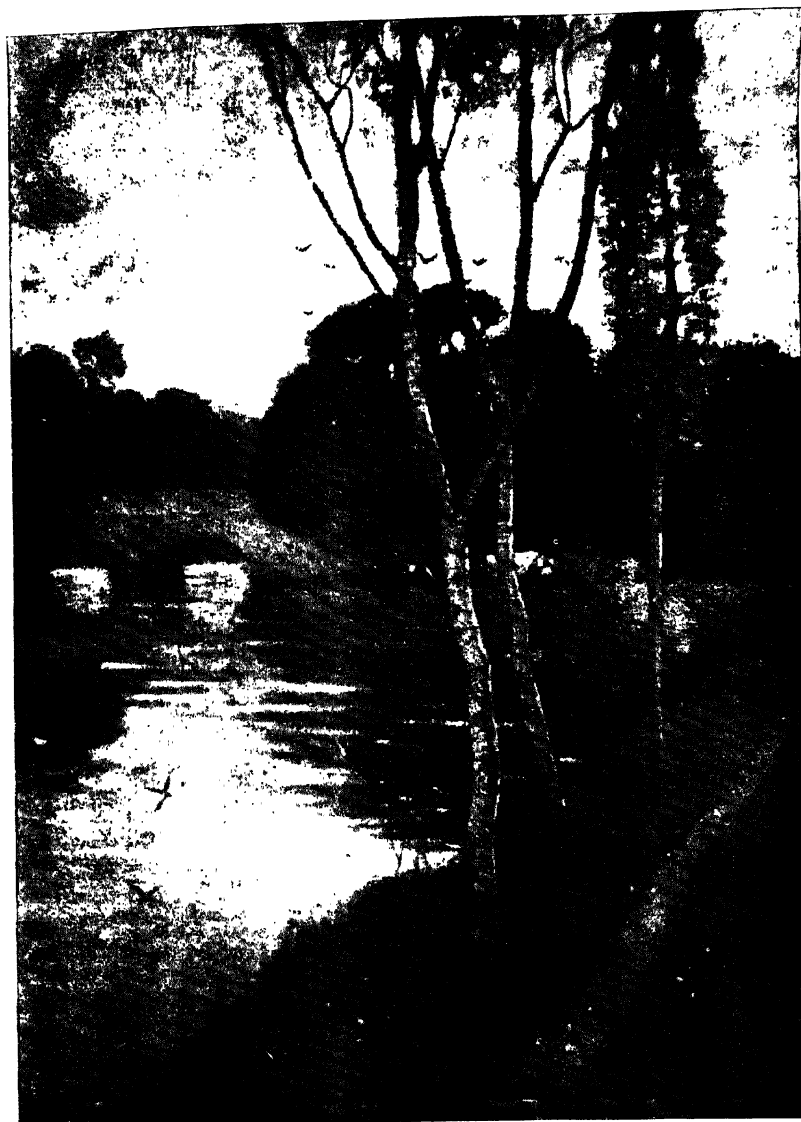
The thin scratch, scratch of a diamond cutting through glass fell upon my ear, then a pane was softly withdrawn from its frame, and through the opening a long yellow hand extended itself towards the stone, seized it, and disappeared back into the fog. I waited breathlessly for the pane to be replaced, but instead five bank notes fluttered through the opening, and fell upon the table. Then the glass returned noiselessly into position, and the face disappeared from behind the window.

* * * * *

The above is a true account of the strange chance that brought the Enchanted Stone into my possession, and of the expedient by which I got rid of it. What I did with the £5000, together with the wonderful and fruitful adventures that befell the Enchanted Stone, and all those who became associated with it, I may perhaps tell at some future time.

Evening by the River

By T. C. Morton



Two Songs

By Nora Hopper

I—Ma Creevin O !

MA CREEVIN O, with your breast of snow,
Why would you go through the convent door ?
Why stand apart with a folded heart,
Feeding the hungry poor ?

Let others kneel and give milk and meal,
While the grey hours steal their youth away,
What grief have you known that you leave us, lone,
Gra, to a sunless day ?

Your hands like silk gave meal and milk
To all the ilk of the wandering shee :
Stay here and learn how your own fires burn
And let the grey nuns be.

Kind loves to your door we'll bring galore,
And the best love, asthore, that is not kind :
No blast shall wither your quicken-tree
So you leave cold saints for the kindly shee,
And the nunnery door behind !

II—Phyllis and Damon

PHYLLIS and Damon met one day :
(Heigho !)

Phyllis was sad and Damon grey,
Tired with treading a separate way.

Damon sighed for his broken flute :
(Heigho !)

Phyllis went with a noiseless foot,
Under the olives stripped of fruit.

Met they, parted they, all unsaid ?
(Heigho !)

Ah, but a ghost's lips are not red :
Damon was old, and Phyllis dead—
(Heigho, heigho !)

Under the Moon

By F. H. Newbery



A Captain of Salvation

By John Buchan

NOR is it any matter of sorrow to us that the gods of the Pagans are no more. For whatsoever virtue was theirs is embodied in our most blessed faith. For whereas Apollo was the most noble of men in appearance and seemed to his devotees the incarnation (if I may use so sacred a word in a profane sense) of the beauty of the male, we have learned to apprehend a higher beauty of the Spirit, as in our blessed Saints. And whereas Jupiter was the king of the world, we have another and more excellent King, even God the Father, the holy Trinity. And whereas Mars was the god of war, the strongest and most warlike of beings, we have the great soldier of our cause, even the Captain of our Salvation. And whereas the most lovely of women was Venus, she whom all men worshipped, to us there is one greater and better, beautiful alike in spirit and body, to wit our Blessed Lady. So it is seen that whatever delights are carnal and of the flesh, such are met by greater delights of Christ and His Church."—An Extract from the writings of Donisarius, a Monk of Padua.

The Salvation Captain sat in his room at the close of a windy March day. It had been a time of storm and sun, blustering showers and flying scuds of wind. The spring was at the threshold with its unrest and promise; it was the season of turmoil and disquietude

disquietude in Nature, and turmoil and disquietude in those whose ears are open to her piping. Even there, in a three-pair back, in the odoriferous lands of Limehouse, the spring penetrated with scarcely diminished vigour. Dust had been whistling in the narrow streets ; the leaden sky, filled with vanishing spaces of blue, had made the dull brick seem doubly sordid ; and the sudden fresh gusts had caused the heavy sickening smells of stale food and unwholesome lodging to seem by contrast more hateful than words.

The Captain was a man of some forty years, tall, with a face deeply marked with weather and evil living. An air of super-induced gravity served only to accentuate the original. His countenance was a sort of epitome of life, full of traces of passion and nobler impulse, with now and then a shadow of refinement and a passing glimpse of breeding. His history had been of that kind which we would call striking, were it not so common. A gentleman born, a scholar after a fashion, with a full experience of the better side of civilisation, he had begun life as well as one can nowadays. For some time things had gone well ; then came the utter and irretrievable ruin. A temptation which meets many men in their career met him, and he was overthrown. His name disappeared from the books of his clubs, people spoke of him in a whisper, his friends were crushed with shame. As for the man himself, he took it otherwise. He simply *went under*, disappeared from the ranks of life into the seething, struggling, disordered crowd below. He, if anything, rather enjoyed the change, for there was in him something of that brutality which is a necessary part of the natures of great leaders of men and great scoundrels. The accidents of his environment had made him the latter ; he had almost the power of proving the former, for in his masterful brow and firm mouth there were hints of extraordinary strength.

His

His history after his downfall was as picturesque a record as needs be. Years of wandering and fighting, sin and cruelty, generosity and meanness followed. There were few trades and few parts of the earth in which he had not tried his luck. Then there had come a violent change. Somewhere on the face of the globe he had met a man and heard words ; and the direction of his life veered round of a sudden to the opposite. Culture, family ties, social bonds had been of no avail to wean him from his headstrong impulses. An ignorant man, speaking plainly some strong sentences which are unintelligible to three-fourths of the world, had worked the change ; and spring found him already two years a servant in that body of men and women who had first sought to teach him the way of life.

These two years had been years of struggle, which only a man who has lived such a life can hope to enter upon. A nature which has run riot for two decades is not cabined and confined at a moment's notice. He had been a wanderer like Cain, and the very dwelling in houses had its hardships for him. But in this matter even his former vice came to aid him. He had been proud and self-willed before in his conflict with virtue. He would be proud and self-willed now in his fight with evil. To his comrades and to himself he said that only the grace of God kept him from wrong ; in his inmost heart he felt that the grace of God was only an elegant name for his own pride of will.

As he sat now in that unlovely place, he felt sick of his surroundings and unnaturally restive. The day had been a trying one for him. In the morning he had gone West on some money-collecting errand, one which his soul loathed, performed only as an exercise in resignation. It was a bitter experience for him to pass along Piccadilly in his shabby uniform, the badge in the eyes of most people of half-crazy weakness. He had passed restaurants
and

and eating-houses, and his hunger had pained him, for at home he lived on the barest. He had seen crowds of well-dressed men and women, some of whom he dimly recognised, who had no time even to glance at the insignificant wayfarer. Old ungodly longings after luxury had come to disturb him. He had striven to banish them from his mind, and had muttered to himself many texts of Scripture and spoken many catchword prayers, for the fiend was hard to exorcise.

The afternoon had been something worse, for he had been deputed to go to a little meeting in Poplar, a gathering of factory-girls and mechanics who met there to talk of the furtherance of Christ's kingdom. On his way the spirit of spring had been at work in him. The whistling of the wind among the crazy chimneys, the occasional sharp gust from the river, the strong smell of a tanyard, even the rough working-dress of the men he passed, recalled to him the roughness and vigour of his old life. In the forenoon his memories had been of the fashion and luxury of his youth ; in the afternoon they were of his world-wide wanderings, their hardships and delights. When he came to the stuffy upper-room where the meeting was held, his state of mind was far from the meek resignation which he sought to cultivate. A sort of angry unrest held him, which he struggled with till his whole nature was in a ferment. The meeting did not tend to soothe him. Brother followed sister in aimless remarks, seething with false sentiment and sickly enthusiasm, till the strong man was near to disgust. The things which he thought he loved most dearly, of a sudden became loathsome. The hysterical fervours of the girls, which only yesterday he would have been ready to call "love for the Lord," seemed now perilously near absurdity. The loud "Amens" and "Hallelujahs" of the men jarred, not on his good taste (that had long gone under), but on his sense of the ludicrous.

He

He found himself more than once admitting the unregenerate thought, "What wretched nonsense is this? When men are living and dying, fighting and making love all around, when the glorious earth is calling with a hundred voices, what fools and children they are to babble in this way!" But this ordeal went by. He was able to make some conventional remarks at the end, which his hearers treasured as "precious and true," and he left the place with the shamefaced feeling that for the first time in his new life he had acted a part.

It was about five in the evening ere he reached his room and sat down to his meal. There was half a stale loaf, a pot of cheap tea, and some of that extraordinary compound which the humorous grocers of the East call butter. He was hungry and ate without difficulty, but such fragments of æsthetic liking as he still possessed rose against it. He looked around his room. The table was common deal, supported by three legs and a bit of an old clothes-prop. On the horsehair sofa among the dusty tidies was his Bible, one or two publications of the Army, two bundles of the *War Cry*, some hymn-books, and—strange relic of the past—a tattered Gaboriau. On the mantelpiece was a little Burmese idol, which acted as a watch-stand, some hideous photographs framed in black, and a china Duke of Wellington. Near it was his bed, ill-made and dingy, and at the bottom an old sea-trunk. On the top lay one relic of gentility, which had escaped the wreck of his fortunes, a silver-backed hair-brush.

The place filled him with violent repugnance. A smell of rich, greasy fish came upstairs to his nostrils; outside a woman was crying; and two children sprawled and giggled beside his door. This certainly was a wretched hole, and his life was hard almost beyond words. He solemnly reviewed his recent existence. On the one side he set down the evils—bad pay, severe and painful

work, poor lodgings, poor food and dismal company. Something stopped him just as he was about to set down the other. "Oh," he cried, "is the love of Jesus nothing that I think like that?" And he began to pray rapidly, "Lord, I believe, forgive my unbelief."

For a little he sat in his chair looking straight before him. It would be impossible to put down in words the peculiar hardness of his struggle. For he had to fight with his memory and his inclinations, both of which are to a certain extent independent of the will; and he did this not by sheer strength of resolution, but by fixing his thought upon an abstraction and attempting to clothe it in warm, lovable attributes. He thought upon the countless mercies of God towards him, as his creed showed them; and so strong was the man that in a little he had gotten the victory.

By-and-by he got up and put on his overcoat, thin and patched, and called so only by courtesy. He suddenly remembered his work, how he was engaged that night to lead a crusade through some of the worst streets by the river. Such a crusade was the romantic description by certain imaginative Salvationists of a procession of some dozen men and women with tambourines and concertinas, singing hymns, and sowing the good seed broadcast in the shape of vociferous invitations to mercy and pardon. He hailed it as a sort of anodyne to his pain. There was small time for morbid recollection and introspection if one were engaged in leading a crew of excited followers in places where they were by no means sure of a favourable reception.

There was a noise without on the stairs, then a rap at the door, and Brother Leather entered, whom Whitechapel and the Mile-End Road knew for the most vigilant of soldiers and violent of exhorters.

"Are you strong in the Lord, Captain?" he asked. "For to-night

we're goin' to the stronghold of Satan. It haint no use a invitin' and invitin'. It haint no good 'nless you compel them to come in. And by the 'elp of God we 'opes to do it. Sister Stokes, she has her tamb'rine, and there's five concertinies from Gray Street, and Brother Clover's been prayin' all day for a great outpourin' of blessin'. 'The feids are wite unto th' 'arvest,'" he quoted.

The Captain rose hastily. "Then hadn't we better be going?" he said. "We're to start at seven, and it's half-past six already."

"Let's have a word of prayer fust," said the other; and straight-way, in defiance of all supposed rules of precedence, this strange private soldier flopped on his knees beside the sofa and poured forth entreaties to his Master. This done he arose, and along with the Captain went down the dingy stairway to the door, and out into the narrow darkening street. The newly-lit gas lamps sent a flicker on the men's faces—the one flabby, soft and weak, but with eyes like coals of fire; the other as strong as steel, but listless and uneager. As they passed, a few ragged street-boys cried the old phrase of derision, "I love Jesus," at the sight of the caps and the red-banded coats. Here again the one smiled as if he had heard the highest praise, while the other glanced angrily through the gloom as if he would fain rend the urchins, as the bears did the children who mocked Elisha.

At last they turned down a stone-paved passage and came into a little room lined with texts which represented the headquarters of the Army in the district. Sitting on the benches or leaning against the wall were a dozen or so of men and women, all wearing the familiar badge, save one man who had come in his working corduroys, and one girl in a black waterproof. The faces of the men were thin and eager, telling of many sacrifices cheerfully made for their cause, of spare dinners, and nights spent out o' bed, of heart-searchings and painful self-communings, of fervent praying
and

and violent speaking. Thin were the women too, thin and weary, with eyes in which utter lassitude strove against enthusiasm, and backs which ached as they rested. They had come from their labours, as seamstresses and milliners, as shop-girls and laundry-maids, and, instead of enjoying a well-won rest, were devoting their few hours of freedom to the furtherance of an ideal which many clever men have derided. Verily it is well for the world that abstract truth is not the measure of right and wrong, of joy and sorrow.

The Captain gave a few directions to the band and then proceeded to business. They were silent men and women in private life. The world was far too grave a matter for them to talk idly. It was only in the streets that speech came thick and fast; here they were as silent as sphinxes—sphinxes a little tired, not with sitting but with going to and fro on the earth.

“Where are we going?” asked one woman.

The Captain considered for a minute ere he replied. “Down by the Mordon Wharves,” he said, “then up Blind Street and Gray Alley to Juke’s Buildings, where we can stop and speak. You know the place, friend Leather?”

“Do I know my own dwellin’?” asked the man thus addressed in a surprised tone. “Wy, I’ve lived there off an’ on for twenty year, and I could tell some tyles o’ the plyce as would make yer that keen you couldn’t wait a minute but must be off doin’ Christ’s work.”

“We’ll be off now,” said the Captain, who had no desire for his assistant’s reminiscences. “I’ll go first with the flag and the rest of you can come in rank. See that you sing out well, for the Lord has much need of singing in these barren lands.” The desultory band clattered down the wooden stair into the street.

Once here the Captain raised the hymn. It was “Oh, haven’t
I been

I been happy since I met the Lord?" some rhapsodical words set to a popular music-hall air. To the chance hearer who hailed from more civilised places the thing must have seemed little better than a blasphemous parody. But all element of farce was absent from the hearts of the grim-faced men and women; and the scene as it lay, the squalid street with its filth stirred by the March wind, the high shifting sky overhead, the flicker and glare of the street lamps as each gust jostled them, the irregular singing, the marching amid the laughs or silent scorn of the bystanders—all this formed a picture which had in it more of the elements of the tragic or the noble than the ludicrous.

And the heart of the man at the head of the little procession was the stage of a drama which had little of the comic about it. The street, the open air, had inflamed again the old longings. Something of the enthusiasm of his following had entered into his blood; but it was a perverted feeling, and instead of desiring earnestly the success of his mission, he longed madly, fiercely for forbidden things. In the short encounter in his room he had come off the victor; but it had only been a forced peace, and now the adversary was at him tooth and nail once more. The meeting with the others had roused in him a deep disgust. Heaven above, was it possible that he, the cock of his troop, the man whom all had respected after a fashion, as men will respect a strong man, should be a bear-leader to fools! The shame of it took him of a sudden, and as he shouted the more loudly he felt his heart growing hot within him at the thought. But, strangely enough, his very pride came once more to help him. At the thought, "Have I really come to care what men say and think about me?" the strong pride within him rose in revolt and restored him to himself.

But the quiet was to be of short duration. A hateful, bitter thought

thought began to rise in him—"What am I in the world but a man of no importance? And I might have been—oh, I might have been anything I chose! I made a mess of it at the beginning, but is it not possible for a man to right himself again with the world? Have I ever tried it? Instead of setting manfully to the task, I let myself drift, and this is what I have become. And I might have been so different. I might have been back at my old clubs with my old friends, married, maybe, to a pretty wife, with a house near the Park, and a place in the country with shooting and riding to hounds, and a devilish fine time of it. And here I must go on slaving and gabbling, doing a fool's work at a drainer's pay." Then came a burst of sharp mental anguish, remorse, hate, evil craving. But it passed, and a flood of counter-thoughts came to oppose it. The Captain was still unregenerate in nature, as the phrase goes, but the leaven was working in him. The thought of all that he had gained—God's mercy, pardon for his sins, a sure hope of happiness hereafter, and a glorified ideal to live by—made him stop short in his regrets.

The hymn had just dragged itself out to its quavering close. Wheeling round, he turned a burning eye on his followers. "Let us raise another, friends," he cried; and began, "The Devil and me we can't agree"—which the rest heartily joined in.

And now the little procession reached a new stage in its journey. The narrow street had grown still more restricted. Gin palaces poured broad splashes of garish light across the pavement. Slat-ternly women and brutal men lined the footpath, and in the kennels filthy little urchins grinned and quarrelled. Every now and then some well-dressed, rakish artiste, or lady of the half-world, pushed her way through the crowds, or a policeman, tall and silent, stalked among the disorderly. Vanity Fair and its denizens were everywhere, from the chattering hucksters to the leering blackguards
and

and sleek traffickers in iniquity. If anything on earth can bring a ray of decency into such a place, then in God's name let it come, whether it be called sense or rant by stay-at-home philosophers.

The hymn-singing added one more element to the discordant noise. But there was in it a suggestion of better things, which was absent from the song of the streets. The obvious chords of the music in that place acquired an adventitious beauty, just as the song of a humble hedge-linnet is lovely amid the croaking of ravens and hooting of owls. The people on the pavement looked on with varying interest. To most it was an everyday exhibition of the unaccountable. Women laughed, and shrieked coarse railleries; some of the men threatened, others looked on in amused scorn; but there was no impulse to active violence. The thing was tolerated as yonder seller of cheap watchguards was borne; for it is an unwritten law in the slums, that folk may do their own pleasure, as long as they cease from interfering offensively with the enjoyment of others.

"'Oo's the cove wi' the flag, Bill?" asked one woman. "'E haint so bad as the rest. Most loikely 'e's taken up the job to dodge the nick."

"Dodge the nick yersel', Lizer," said the man addressed. "'Wy, it's the chap's wye o' making his livin', a roarin' and a preachin' like that. S'help me, I'd rather cry 'Welks' any dye than go about wi' sich a crew."

A woman, garishly adorned, with a handsome flushed face, looked up at the Captain.

"Why, it's Jack," she cried. "Bless me if it ain't Jack. Jack, Jack, what are you after now, not coming to speak to me. Don't you mind Sal, your little Sal. I'm coming to yer, I ain't forgotten yer." And she began to push her way into mid-street.

The Captain looked to the side, and his glance rested upon her face.

face. It was as if the Devil and all his angels were upon him that night. Evil memories of his past life thronged thick and fast upon him. He had already met and resisted the world, and now the flesh had come to torment him. But here his armour was true and fast. This was a temptation which he had choked at the very outset of his reformation. He looked for one moment at her, and in the utter loathing and repugnance of that look, she fell back ; and the next instant was left behind.

The little streets, which radiate from the wharf known as Mordon's, are so interlaced and crooked that to find one's way in them is more a matter of chance than good guiding even to the initiated. The houses are small and close, the residence of the very sweepings of the population ; the shops are ship-chandlers and low eating-houses, pawnshops, emporia of cheap jewellery, and remnant drapers. At this hour of the night there is a blaze of dull gas-light on either side, and the proprietors of the places of custom stand at their doors inviting the bystanders to inspect their goods. This is the hotbed of legalised crime, the rendezvous of half the wickedness of the earth. Lascars, Spaniards, Frenchmen jostle Irishmen, and Scotsmen, and the true-born Englishmen in these narrow purlieus. If a man disappears utterly from view you may be sure to find him somewhere in that network of alleys, for there it would be hard for the law to penetrate *incolis invitis*. It is a sort of Cave of Adullam on the one hand, to which the morally halt and maimed of all nations resort ; and, on the other, a nursery of young vice and unformed devilry. Sailors straddled about the pavement, or stood in knots telling their tales in loud voices and plentiful oaths ; every beershop was continually discharging its stream of filthy occupants, filthy and prosperous. The element of squalor and misery was here far less in evidence. All the inhabitants seemed gorged and well clad, but their faces
were

were stained with vice so horrible that poverty and tatters would have been a welcome relief.

The Salvation band penetrated into this Sodom with fear in the heart of each member. It was hard for the Gospel to strive with such seared and branded consciences. The repulsive, self-satisfied faces of the men, the smug countenances of the women, made that little band seem hopeless and Quixotic in the extreme. The Captain felt it, too; but in him there was mingled another feeling. He thought of himself as a combatant entering the arena. He felt dimly that some great struggle was impending, some monstrous temptation, some subtle wile of the Evil One. The thought made him the more earnest. "Sing up, men," he cried, "the Devil is strong in this place."

It was, the truth, and the proof awaited him. A man stepped out from among the bystanders and slapped his shoulder. The Captain started and looked. It was the Devil in person.

"Hullo, Jack!" said the new-comer. "Good God, who'd have thought of seeing you here? Have you gone off your head now?"

The Captain shivered. He knew the speaker for one of his comrades of the old days, the most daring and jovial of them all. The two had been hand and glove in all manner of evil. They had loved each other like brothers, till the great change came over the one, which fixed a gulf between them for ever.

"You don't mean to tell me you've taken up with this infernal nonsense, Jack? No, I won't believe it. It's just another of your larks. You were always the one for originality."

"Go away, Hilton," said the Captain hoarsely, "go away. I've done with you. I can't see you any more."

"What the deuce has come over you, Jack? Not speak to me any more! Why, what foolery is this? You've gone and
turned

turned a regular old wife, bless me if you haven't. Oh, man, give it up. It's not worth it. Don't you remember the fun we've had in our time? Gad, Jack, when you and I stood behind yon big tree in Kaffraria with twenty yelling devils wanting our blood; don't you remember how I fell and you got over me, and, though you were bleeding like a pig, you kept them off till the Cape troopers came up? And when we were lost, doing picketing up in the Drakenberg, you mind how we chummed together for our last meal? And heavens! it was near our last. I feel that infernal giddiness still. And yet you tell me to go away."

"Oh, Hilton," said the Captain, "come and be one of us. The Lord's willing to receive you, if you'll only come. I've got the blessing, and there's one waiting for you if you'll only take it."

"Blessing be damned!" said the other with a laugh. "What do I want with your blessing when there's life and the world to see? What's the good of poking round here, and crying about the love of Jesus and singing twaddle, and seeing nobody but old wives and white-faced shopmen, when you might be out on the open road, with the wind and the stars and the sun, and meet with men, and have your fling like a man. Don't you remember the days at Port Said, when the old Frenchman twanged his banjo and the girls danced and—hang it, don't you feel the smell of the sand and the heat in your nostrils, you old fool?"

"Oh, my God!" said the Captain, "I do. Go away, Hilton. For God's sake, go away and leave me!"

"Can't you think," went on the other, "of the long nights when we dropped down the Irrawaddy, of the whistle of the wind in the white sails, and the singing of the boatmen, and the sick-suck of the alligators among the reeds; and how we went ashore at the little village and got arrack from the natives, and made a holy

holy sight of the place in the morning? It was worth it, though we got the sack for it, old man."

The Captain made no answer. He was muttering something to himself. It might have been a prayer.

"And then there was that time when we were up country in Queensland, sugar farming in the bush, thinking a billy of tea the best thing on earth, and like to faint with the work and the heat. But, Jove, wasn't it fine to head off the cattle when you knew you might have a big bull's horn in your side every minute? And then at night to sit outside the huts and smoke pig-tail and tell stories that would make your hair rise! We were a queer lot, Jack, but we were men, *men*, do you hear?"

A flood of recollection came over the Captain, vehement, all-powerful. He felt the magic of the East, the wonder of the South, the glory of the North burning in his heart. The old wild voices were calling him, voices of land and sea, the tongues of the moon and the stars and the beasts of the field, the halcyon voices of paganism and nature which are still strong in the earth. Behind him rose the irregular notes of the hymn; at his side was the tempter, and in his own heart was the prince of the world, the master of pleasure, the great juggler of pain. In that man there was being fought the old fight, which began in the Garden, and will never end, the struggle between the hateful right and the delicious wrong.

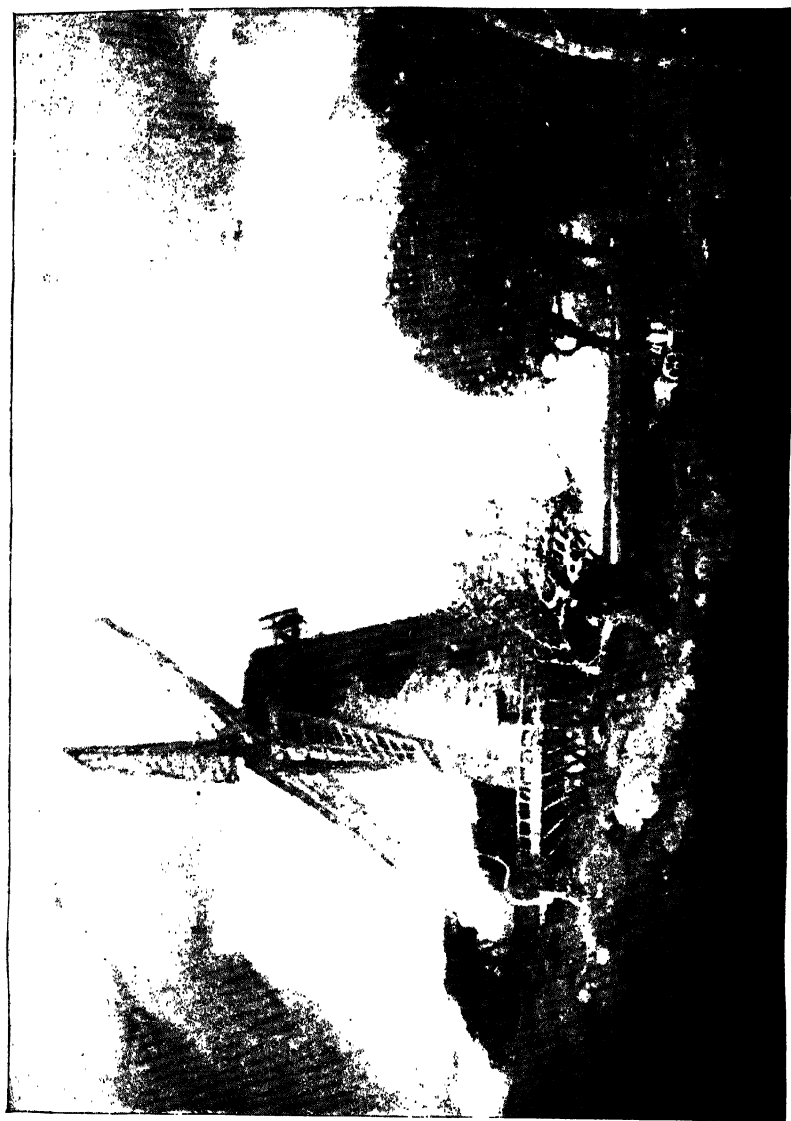
"Oh man, come with me," cried Hilton, "I've got a berth down there in a ship which sails to-morrow, and we'll go out to our old place, where they'll be glad to get us, and we'll have a devilish good time. I can't be staying here, with muggy stinks, and white-faced people, and preaching and praying, and sloppy weather. Come on, and in a month we'll be seeing the old Coal-sack above us, and smelling the palms and the sea-water; and then, after that, there'll

there'll be the Bush, the pines and the gum-trees and the blue sky, and the hot, clear air, and rough-riding and adventure ; and by God we'll live like gentlemen and fine fellows, and never come back to this cursed hole any more. Come on, and leave the psalm-singing."

A spasm of convulsive pain, of exquisite agony, of heart-breaking struggle came over the Captain's face, stayed a moment, and passed. He turned round to his followers. "Sing louder, lads," he cried, "we're fighting a good fight." And then his voice broke down, and he stumbled blindly on, still clutching the flag.

A Windmill

By James Paterson



Georg Brandes

A Silhouette

By Julie Norregard

AN old ballad sings of Denmark as a swan's nest, thrown on the blue sea.

Her sons are the swans.

Of these many have kept close to the nest, patiently strengthening and guarding it, till they sank in death and their saga ended.

But there were other swans with mightier wills and more arduous desires. These spread out their strong wings and flew over the world, bringing to foreign lands tidings of their humble homestead. Their names are shining in gold on the silver tablets of fame: Thorvaldsen, Orsted, Hans Christian Andersen, Gade, and there, forcibly writ—the youngest of them all—Georg Brandes.

* * * * *

The youngest, yes, but not the least illustrious. For, indeed, in every city throughout Europe where literature holds a place of honour, his name is known as that of the finest of living critics.

He is a special favourite in Berlin and Vienna, and is treated as a prince in St. Petersburg. His very name is a banner of liberty

to

to the Polish student, and the Tzecs look up to him as one of the bravest fighters for freedom. In Paris he belongs to those artistic circles to which but few foreigners are welcomed. Amongst his best friends are Bourget and Daudet, as was the late M. Taine, who, Dr. Brandes says, was the man who, more than any other, has influenced his mind and opinions.

The country that has honoured him least, and least understood the value of his genius, is the land to which he has given his youth, his work, and the very finest music of his soul—the land where he was born—Denmark.

When, therefore, during his recent stay in London, the representative of the *Daily Chronicle* asked him "What is your position in Copenhagen?" it was the bitter truth Dr. Brandes spoke when he answered, "I have none."

Indeed, none of those honours governments are accustomed to bestow on the best men in the country have been bestowed on him. He was the only man for the chair of æsthetics at the University, but pedantic prejudice has denied it him for years. He has no title, no decoration, no subsidy. He is seldom a guest at Court, nor is he a lion in the salons of the aristocracy.

From a social point of view he might even be called a nobody.

Yet, for all that, there is no Danish citizen with a finer, more significant position. His influence, however unacknowledged, is far-reaching and of a curiously subtle power. It shows itself everywhere. Many are those whose whole lives have been changed by a word of his. His helping hand, stretched out in the last moment, has saved for the nation art and individualities, which otherwise might have vanished into Nirvana.

There is not to-day in Denmark, Norway, or Sweden, an author, a thinker, a critic, from the greatest to the youngest aspirant, who
does

does not owe something to Georg Brandes. His honours lie in their gratitude, his kingdom in their hearts.

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Having taken his degree as a doctor at the University of Copenhagen, he has a right to lecture in the buildings of the University, and he has largely exercised that right. It was the 3rd of November 1871, after his return from a journey to Italy, that Georg Brandes gave his first lecture. Timidly, he had chosen the smallest room. But on his arrival he found people standing all down the staircase, and already the first evening the largest room had to be used. It is this room, No. 7, which has ever since been the forum whence his inspired words have gone forth.

It was here, through his lectures, even more than through his books, that he influenced the minds of young Danish men and women.

How well I remember those evenings, twice a week, when we stood together waiting outside the big door. It was not opened till seven o'clock, but to secure a seat we had to be there long before. All young, all enthusiastic, all dreaming of the possibilities life had in store for us, we stood there, crowded together on the steps leading to the portal. Round us the quiet square, clad in its robe of snow; behind us the dome, silent and solemn. Over us the moon and a thousand stars glittering with that cold radiance only known in the winter nights of the north.

Woe to the porter, if he did not open for us the minute the big clock sounded. How we used to hammer on the door, till it echoed through the old buildings. Then there was the run upstairs, the rush down the corridors, the crush and struggle, till at last one could breathe contentedly in one's favourite corner.

A few minutes after, a storm of clapping hands ; then silence.

On the cathedra stood Georg Brandes.

A tall, lithe figure, dressed simply but with scrupulous care. And what a wonderful face is his! Irregular features, some might even be called ugly; it seems impossible to say exactly what they are like, captivated as one is by their ever-changing expression—quiet thoughtfulness flashing into humour, tired melancholy breaking into a sunlit smile.

He speaks without pose and affectation, seems scarcely to raise his voice above the pitch of ordinary conversation, yet it carries each phrase to the furthest corner of the room. But behind the quietness is felt the quivering of a passionate nature, which now and then, when he is roused by some best loved or best hated theme, flashes on the audience with a suddenness that electrifies. Sometimes we would follow him with Goethe to the Court of Weimar, or another time he would reveal to us the gigantic fancy concealed behind the mountains of dull description in the works of Zola. With glowing words he would paint for us the poetry and romance of Polish literature, or illuminate for us the golden thoughts of Nietzsche, young Germany's ill-fated philosopher.

Winter after winter has passed, and youth has fled with the years. The sadness in his eyes has deepened, and his hair is touched with silver, but his vitality is still the same, his spiritual alertness as keen as ever. Still he gathers round him the young men and women of Copenhagen, and when he showers on them the sparks of his own rich personality, he sets aflame the smouldering fire of their natures, brings into bloom the flowers that lie sleeping in their souls.

* * * *

A favourite saying of Dr. Brandes' is "that men and women can be divided into three classes—those who command, those who obey, and those who can neither command nor obey, and that *they* ought

ought to be killed," and how savagely his voice rings out the last word—it sounds like the click of the guillotine.

Many minutes are not needed to find out to what class he himself belongs. It is written on his brow that he was born to command, was intended by the Norns for a leader of men. Many are the incidents in his life which show how his strong will has carried everything before him.

More characteristic than any seems this little story of how his first pamphlet was printed. He was a very young man at the time, known only in University circles as a promising student, and publicly his name meant nothing. He had written a paper upon some burning question of the day, and brought it to one of the big printers at Copenhagen. Calling shortly afterwards to fetch the proofs, he found that nothing had yet been done with the MS. The manager told him in rather an off-handed way that he must wait, they had other important work to do first. Georg Brandes looked at him hard, and told him that no work could be more important than his, and that his MS. must be set up at once—his MS. could never wait. "Let me tell the printers myself," he said.

Before the astonished manager could interfere he heard from the workroom a clear, strong voice commanding the men that whenever they got his writings they must put aside all other work and do his first. But such was the fire of his temperament, such the will-power in his face, that the men did not shrug their shoulders as at a madman, but instead they gave him an "Hurrah!" and followed out his orders. Shortly after he began writing his books, and every morning he brought to the printers some few sheets, of which the proofs were sent to him in the evening. The curious point in his method of working is that he gets his books printed page by page as he goes along. For as wine invigorates the blood, so does the printed word inspire his brain.

Here,

Here, as in so many other ways, he shows himself an impatient man—a man who must not be kept waiting. His desires must be fulfilled at once. In this there would lie danger for his work were not his impatience balanced by great perseverance. His impatience does not make him hurry; his work is finished as that of few other writers, and no pains seem to him too great, no trouble too tedious, if thereby his book may be strengthened.

Thus he gave twenty-three years of his life to his most important work, "Main Currents of European Literature in the Nineteenth Century." To convey an idea of the varied knowledge he possesses, I give the sub-titles. They are: "The Literature of Emigrants," "The Romantic School in Germany," "The Reaction in France," "Naturalism in England," "The Romantic School in France," and "Young Germany."

The last six years Dr. Brandes "has lived with Shakespeare," to use his own phrase. The first two volumes of his study of him have appeared in Danish, the last and third he is now writing. Fortunately, this great work is being translated into English by Mr. William Archer, and when it appears will, without doubt, make a deep impression. Dr. Brandes hopes that he has been successful in his attempt to bring forth the great poet's personality by a critical study of his work. "For," as he says, "when a writer leaves thirty volumes behind him, it is the world's fault if it knows nothing of his life." Of the critical value of the book, others more competent must judge. I can only say that it reads like a fairy-tale.

Though crammed with facts, it does not belong to the "dry goods" of literature. The historical events of that most picturesque period of English history are painted in colouring, the glow and richness of which remind one of some great master of the Renaissance, and the exposition of the dramas is so subtle, so fantastically

fantastically vivid, that it seems to add new treasures to the old.

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Sparkling as is the writing of Dr. Brandes, his conversation is no less so. Indeed, a more entertaining companion can hardly be imagined. He seems to know everything, to have seen everything, and in his travels all over Europe he has met most of the great ones of the earth. He talks freely about every subject, casts new light over the most trivial matter, and can, in a few words, give a sketch of this or that famous person.

Stuart Mill, Renan, Ibsen, Max Klinger, Tolstoy, Bismarck ; he will pass in review all such powerful influences of our century. The last name brings him to talk of his long stay in Berlin, and of the old Emperor and his Court, and suddenly he says :

"I have never felt myself so completely left out in the cold as when at a great Court ball at Potsdam. I was the only one of eleven hundred guests who had no decoration." With a twinkle in his eye he adds : "Unless it was when at a big dinner in Switzerland I found myself the only one who was not condemned to death—all the other being Russian and Polish exiles."

Being an excellent *causeur* it is no wonder that Dr. Brandes has always been a great favourite with women. His mind fascinates them, and they never feel overwhelmed with his knowledge, because he always cares most to try and make them talk about themselves, and he is certainly an artist at that.

That dreadful female monster—if it is proper to call her female—who, two minutes after being introduced, tells one that she wears "divided skirts" and starts her day with a brandy-and-soda, has no interest for Dr. Brandes. He combines with his very advanced views in other directions the old-fashioned idea that womanhood still remains the greatest fascination of woman.

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I don't mean by this that he opposes the liberty women nowadays have obtained. Nothing could be further from his mind. He means the two sexes to have equal rights and equal freedom. But he has no sympathy with the woman who, because she works and fights her own battles, must throw to the winds all grace and beauty. For there is nothing book-wormish about Georg Brandes. As a true pagan, he loves to be surrounded by youth and loveliness. There is an old-world tenderness and grace about his bearing towards women, and he belongs to that race of men who, like Bismarck, believe that a man never looks more charming than when reverently bending over a woman's hand.

It need scarcely be said that Dr. Brandes often finds the opportunity to look charming !

* * * * *

On the 26th of October 1891, it was twenty-five years since he had published his first book. The anniversary was a good opportunity for his friends and followers to honour him. A public dinner was arranged, and in the course of the evening the workmen, the artists, and the students greeted him with torches. The great preparations on the part of his friends, and the complete silence with which the Conservative papers treated the matter, aroused curiosity, and when the evening came all Copenhagen was in the streets to see the procession.

The dinner was given at the Concert Palace, a beautiful rococo building in one of the main streets. On the balcony stood Georg Brandes, surrounded by his nearest friends, while every window in the great building was thronged with festive men and women. In front the big courtyard was filled with the young men carrying torches, and outside on the pavement and down the side streets were thousands of spectators.

It was from this balcony that Dr. Brandes thanked all those
who

who paid him homage—thanked them in words which have never ceased to burn in the memories of those present. Though the wonderful fire of the speech must more or less be lost in translation, I think that even the poorest translation could not fail to convey some of its original poetry and power.

“Thanks for those torches !

“Thanks for lighting them. Thanks for carrying them. May they still blaze, still go on shining—fire in the minds, fire in the wills, blood-red fire burning through life.

“Thanks for those torches !

“Torches in the night mean hope in time of darkness. In the early Christian days they used to be carried on Easter Saturday as a symbol of the Resurrection. May the resurrection of our own time be not too far away.

“I take this fire as an omen. It is good, it is splendid to see workmen, artists, students, all carrying torches together. Let us go on like this, and we will get light.

“No element is so pure as fire. It cleanses the air. May it purify the foul air in this town.

“No element is so gay as fire. It stirs the nerves like music and like wine. May it brighten the minds in this country.

“The light of the torches is as the light of the mind. As rain cannot quench the one, mere words cannot kill the other ; nay, not even a storm of words. The light of thought cannot be quenched, and liberty and justice are the two torches which set each other aflame.

“Thanks for those torches !

“May they shine and warm. May they burn up all lies and conventionalities. May they burn to ashes all the thought-corpses from times dead and gone.

“Are

"Are you tired of carrying torches? Then hand them to the younger generation.

"In Latin the morning star is called Lucifer, which means the light-bringer. Old fathers of the Church, misunderstanding a scriptural sentence, believed, and made others believe, that this spirit of the morning star, this Lucifer, was a demon.

"Never believe that! It is the most stupid, the most dangerous of all superstitions. The nation that believes that is lost. Lucifer, the father of fire, the torch-bearer, the flame-spirit, whose symbol is the torch he lifts high in his hand: he is that very spark of life which fires our blood, he is the star of intelligence that makes bright our heaven.

"He is the true angel of light. Never believe that the angel of light has fallen or could fall. It is a lie!

"Thanks for those torches!

"See that they blaze! See that they shine!"

* * * * *

So did he speak, but what he asked of those young men who, in the dark October night, crowded around him, torches in hand, he himself has fulfilled. Never has his enemy had the strength to snatch the torch from his hand, never has he tired of carrying it high, that it might shed its radiant light over his country and his people.

I thank you, torch-bearer, for the light you gave us!

Hen and Chickens

By George Pirie



Postscript

By Ernest Wentworth

THIS enviable paper ! Oh, to think
That it will go, will really, really go
To her, my mistress. Had it soul to know,
What enviable paper ! Oh, to think——

The sweet light of her eyes, her sweet clear eyes,
Shall shine on it : her sweet cool hands caress it,
And bear it to her sweet warm lips ; and press it
The sweet pale roses of her cheek. First, eyes,

Hands, lips, and cheek, and then, at night, all night,
In the sweet darkness of her room (ah, so !)
In the sweet stillness of her room (speak low !)
I guess where it will lie, at night, all night.

The Old Mill

By R. M. Stevenson



In Dull Brown

By Evelyn Sharp

"ALL the same," said Nancy, who was lazily sipping her coffee in bed, "brown doesn't suit you a bit."

"No," said Jean sadly, "and I should not be wearing it at all if my other skirt did not want brushing. Nevertheless, a russet-brown frock demands adventures. The girls in novels always wear russet-brown, whatever their complexion is, and they always have adventures. Now——"

"Isn't it time you started?" asked the gentle voice of her sister. Jean glanced at the clock and said something in English that was not classical.

"I shall have to take an omnibus. Bother!" she said, and the heroine of the russet-brown frock made an abrupt and undignified exit.

It was a fine warm morning in November, the sort of day that follows a week of stormy wet weather as though to cheat the unwary into imagining that the spring instead of the winter is on its way. The pavements were still wet from yesterday's rain, the trees in the park stood stripped by yesterday's gale; only the sun and the sparrows kept up the illusion that it was never going to rain any more. But the caprices of the atmosphere make no impression on the people who cannot help being out; and Jean, as she made the fourteenth passenger on the top of an omnibus, had

a vague

a vague feeling of contempt for the other thirteen who were engrossed in their morning papers.

“Just imagine missing that glorious effect,” she thought to herself, as they rumbled along the edge of the Green Park where the mist was slowly yielding to the warmth of the sun and allowing itself to be coaxed out of growing into a fog. And almost simultaneously she became as material as the rest, in her annoyance with her neighbour for taking more than his share of the seat.

“Nice morning !” he said at that moment, and folded up his *Telegraph*.

“Yes,” said Jean, in a tone that was not encouraging. That the morning was “nice” would never have occurred to her ; and it seemed unfair to sacrifice the effect over the Green Park, even for conversational purposes. Then she caught sight of his face, which was a harmless one, and in an ordinary way good-looking, and she accused herself of priggishness, and stared at the unconscious passenger in front, preparatory to cultivating the one at her side.

“We deserve some compensation for yesterday,” she continued, more graciously.

“Yesterday ? Oh, it was beastly wet, wasn’t it ? I suppose you don’t like wet weather, eh ?” said the man, with a suspicion of familiarity in his tone. Jean frowned a little.

“That comes of the simple russet gown,” she thought ; “of course he thinks I am a little shop-girl.” But the sun was shining, and life had been very dull lately, and she would be getting down at Piccadilly Circus. Besides, he was little more than a boy, and she liked boys, and there would be no harm in having five minutes’ conversation with this one.

“I suppose no one does. I wasn’t trying to be particularly original,” she replied carelessly.

He

He smiled and glanced at her with more interest. Her identity was beginning to puzzle him.

"Going to business?" he asked tentatively.

"Well, yes, I suppose so. At least, I am going to teach three children all sorts of things they don't want to learn a bit."

"How awfully clever of you!"

The little obvious remark made her laugh. In spite of the humble brown dress that did not suit her, she looked very pretty when she threw back her head and laughed.

"That is because you have never taught," she said; "to be a really good teacher you must systematically forget quite half of what you do know. For instance, I can teach German better than anything else in the world, because I know less about it. Perhaps that is why I always won the German prizes at school," she added reflectively.

"You are very paradoxical—or very cynical, which is it?" asked her neighbour, smiling.

"Oh, I don't know. Am I? But did you ever try to teach?"

"Not I. Gives one the hump, doesn't it? I should just whack the little beasts when they didn't work. Don't you feel like that sometimes?"

"Clearly you never tried to teach," she said, and laughed again.

"Those are lucky pupils of yours," he observed.

"Why?" she asked abruptly, and flashed a stern look at him sideways.

"Oh, because you—seem right on it, don't you know," he answered hastily. The adroitness of his answer pleased her, and she put him down as a gentleman, and felt justified in going a little further.

"I like

"I like teaching, yes," she went on gravely. "But all the same I am glad that I only teach for my living and can draw for my pleasure. Now whatever made me tell you that, I wonder?"

"It was awfully decent of you to tell me," he said; "I suppose you thought I should be interested, eh?"

"I suppose I did," she assented, and this time she laughed for no reason whatever.

"Will you let me say something very personal?" he asked, waxing bolder. But his tone was still humble, and she felt more kindly towards him now that he evidently knew she was not to be patronised. Besides, she was curious. So she said nothing to dissuade him, and he went on.

"Why do you look so beastly happy, and all that, don't you know? Is it because you work so hard?"

"I look happy!" she exclaimed. "I suppose it is the sun, then, or the jolly day, or—or the *feel* of everything after the rain. Yes, I suppose it must be that."

"I don't, then. Lots of girls might feel all that and not look as you do. I think it is because you have such a bally lot to do."

"I should stop thinking that, if I were you," said Jean a little bitterly; "I know that is the usual idea about women who work—among those who don't. They should try it for a time, and see."

"I believe you are cynical after all," observed her companion. "Don't you like being called happy?"

"Oh, yes, I like it. But I hate humbug, and it is all nonsense to pretend that working hard for one's living is rather an amusing thing to do. Because it isn't, and if it has never been so for a man, why should it be for a woman? If anything, it is worse for women. For one happy hour it gives us two sad ones; it makes

makes us hard—what you call cynical. It builds up our characters at the expense of our hearts. It makes heroines of us and spoils the woman in us. We learn to look the world in the face, and it teaches us to be prigs. We probe into its realities for the first time, and the disclosure is too much for us. Working hard to get enough bread and butter to eat is a sordid, demoralising thing, and the people who talk cant about it never had to do it themselves. *You* don't like the kind of woman who works, you know you don't ! ”

The omnibus was slowing at the Circus. Jean stopped suddenly and glanced up at her companion with an amused, half shamefaced look.

“ I am so sorry. You see how objectionable it has made *me*. Aren't you glad you will never see me again ? ”

And before he had time to speak she had slipped away, and the omnibus was turning ruthlessly down Waterloo Place.

“ What deuced odd things women are,” he reflected, by way of deluding himself into the belief that amusement and not interest was the predominant sensation in his mind. But the next morning saw him waiting carefully in West Kensington for the same City omnibus as before ; and when it rumbled on its way to Piccadilly Circus and no one in russet-brown got up to relieve the monotony of black coats and umbrellas round him, he was quite unreasonably disappointed, though he told himself savagely at the same time that of course he had never expected to see her at all.

“ And if I had, she would have avoided me at once. Women are always like that,” he thought, and just as the reflection shaped itself in his mind he caught a glimpse of Air Street that sent his usual composure to the winds and brought him down the steps at a pace that upset the descent of all the other passengers who had no similar desire to rush in the direction of Air Street.

"Did yer expect us to take yer to Timbuctoo?" scoffed the conductor, with the usual contempt of his kind for the passenger who gets into the wrong omnibus. But the victim of his scorn was as regardless of it as of the pink ticket he was grinding into pulp in his hand; and he stood on the pavement with his underlip drawn tightly inwards, until he had regained his customary air of gentlemanly indifference. Then he turned up into Regent Street and made a cross cut through the slums that lie on the borders of Soho.

And as Jean was hastening along Oxford Street, ten minutes later, she met him coming towards her with a superb expression of pleased surprise on his face, which deceived her so completely that she bowed at once and held out her hand to him, although, as she said afterwards to Nancy, "he was being most dreadfully unconventional, and I couldn't help wondering if he would have spoken to me again, if I had worn my new tailor-made gown and looked ordinary." At the time she only felt that Oxford Street, even on a damp and muggy morning, was quite a nice place for a walk.

"Beastly day for you to be out," he began, taking away her umbrella and holding his own over her head. To be looked after was a novel experience to Jean, and she found herself half resenting his air of protection.

"Oh, it's all right. You get used to it when you have to," she said with a short laugh. It was not at all what she wanted to say to him, but the perversity of her nature was uppermost and she had to say it.

"All the same, it is beastly rough on you," he persisted.

"Why? Some one must do the work," she said defiantly.

"Is it so important, then?" he asked with a smile that was half a sneer. Jean blushed hotly.

"It

"It means my living to me," she said ; and he winced at her unpleasant frankness.

"You were quite different yesterday, weren't you ? " he complained gently.

"You speak as though my being one thing or another ought to depend on your pleasure," she retorted ; "of course, you think like everybody else that a woman is only to be tolerated as long as she is cheerful. How can you be cheerful when the weather is dreary, and you are tired out with yesterday's work ? You don't know what it is like. You should keep to the women who don't work ; they will always look pretty, and smile sweetly and behave in a domesticated manner."

"I don't think I said anything to provoke all that, did I ? "

"Yes, you did," she answered unreasonably. "I said—I mean *you* said, oh never mind ! But you do like domesticated women best, don't you ? On your honour now ? "

There was no doubt that he did, especially at that moment. But he lied, smilingly, and well.

"I like all women. But most of all, women like you. Didn't I tell you yesterday how happy you looked ? You are such a rum little girl—oh hang, please forgive me. But without any rotting, I wish you'd tell me what you do want me to say. When I said how jolly you looked, you were offended ; and now I pity you for being out in the rain, you don't like that any better. What am I to do ? "

"I don't see why you should do anything," she said curtly. They had reached the corner of Berners Street, and she came to a standstill. "I am glad I met you again," she added very quickly, without meeting his eyes. And then she ran down the street, and disappeared inside a doorway.

Tom Unwin stepped into a hansom with two umbrellas and an unsatisfactory

unsatisfactory impression of the last quarter of an hour. And for the next two mornings he went to the City by train. But the third saw him again in Oxford Street shortly before nine o'clock, and he held a small and elegant umbrella in his hand, although it was a cloudless day, and there was hoar frost beneath the gravel on the wood pavement.

"How very odd that we should meet again," she exclaimed, blushing in spite of the self-possession on which she prided herself.

"Not so very odd," he replied ; "I believe I am responsible for this meeting."

"I feel sure there is a suitable reply to that, but you mustn't expect me to make it. I am never any good at making suitable replies," said Jean ; and she laughed as she had done the first time they met.

"I don't want suitable replies from you," he rejoined, just as lightly ; "tell me what you really think instead."

"That it was quite charming of you to come this particular way to the City on this particular morning," said Jean demurely. "Now, do you know, I should have thought it was ever so much quicker to go along the Strand."

"On the contrary, I find it very much quicker when I come along Oxford Street."

"At all events, *you* know how to make suitable replies."

"Then you thought that was a suitable reply ? Got you there, didn't I ?" and he laughed, which pleased her immensely, although she pretended to be hurt.

"Isn't it queer how one can live two perfectly different lives at the same time ?" she said irrelevantly.

"Two ? I live half a dozen. But let's hear yours first."

"I was only thinking," continued Jean, "that if the mother of my

my pupils knew I was walking along Oxford Street with some one I had never been introduced to——”

“Well?” he said, as she paused.

“Oh, well, it isn’t exactly an ordinary thing to do, is it?”

“Why not?”

“Well, it isn’t, is it?”

“But must one be ordinary?”

“People won’t forgive you for being anything else, unless you are in a history book, where you can’t do any harm.”

“People be hanged! When shall I see you again?”

“Next time you take a short cut to the City, I suppose. Good-bye.”

“Stop!” he cried. And when she did stop, with an air of innocent inquiry on her face, he found he had nothing whatever to say.

“You—you haven’t told me your name,” he stammered lamely.

“Is that all? You needn’t make me any later just for *that*,” she exclaimed, turning away again. “Besides, you haven’t told me yours,” she added, over her shoulder.

“Do you want to know it?”

“Why, no; it doesn’t matter to me. But I thought you wanted to make some more conversation. Good-bye, again.”

“Well, I’m hanged! Look here, if I tell you mine, will you tell me yours?”

“But I don’t mind a bit if you *don’t* tell me yours.”

“Will you, though?”

“Oh, make haste, or else I can’t wait to hear it.”

“Here you are, then. It is——Tom.”

She faced him sternly.

“Why don’t you go on?”

“Unwin,”

"Unwin," he added, hastily. "Now yours, please."

But the only answer he got was a mocking smile ; and he was again left at the corner of Berners Street with a lady's umbrella in his hand.

The next morning there was a dull yellow fog, and Jean was in a perverse mood.

"I think you are very mistaken to walk to business on a day like this, when you might go by train," she said, as she reluctantly gave up her books to be carried by him. The fog was making her eyes smart, and she felt cross.

"But I shall get my reward," he said, with elaborate courtesy.

"Oh, please don't. The fog is bad enough without allusions to the hymn-book. Besides, I can't stand being used as a means for somebody else to get into heaven. It is very selfish of me, I suppose, but I don't like it."

"I am afraid you mistake me. I never for a moment associated you with my chances of salvation."

"Then why didn't you?" she cried indignantly. "I should like to know why you come and bother me every morning like this if you think I am as hopelessly bad as all that! I didn't ask you to come, did I? Please give me my books and let me go."

"I think you hopelessly bad? Why, I assure you——"

"Give me my books. Can't you see how late I am?" she said, stamping her foot impetuously. And she seized Bright's English History and Cornwell's Geography out of his hand, and left him precipitately, without another word.

"You are a most unreasonable little girl," he exclaimed hotly ; and the policeman to whom he said it smiled patiently.

He started with the intention of going by train on the following morning ; then he changed his mind, and ran back to take an omnibus

omnibus. After that he found it was getting late, so he took a cab to Oxford Circus, and then strolled on towards Holborn as though nothing but chance or necessity had brought him there. But, although he walked as far as Berners Street and back again to the Circus, he met no one in a dull brown frock. And he was just as unsuccessful the next morning, and the one after, and at the end of a week he found himself the sad possessor of a slender silk umbrella, a regretful remembrance, and a fresh store of cynicism.

"She is like all the others," he told himself, with a shrug of his shoulders ; "they play the very devil with you until they begin to get frightened of the consequences, and then they fight shy. And I'm hanged if I even know her name !"

And the days wore on, and the autumn grew into winter, and Oxford Street no longer saw the playing of a comedy at nine o'clock in the morning. And Tom Unwin found other interests in life, and if a chance occurrence reminded him of a determined little figure in russet brown, the passing thought brought nothing but an amused smile to his lips.

Then the spring came, suddenly and completely, on the heels of a six weeks' frost ; and chance took him down Piccadilly one morning in March, where the budding freshness of the trees drew him into the Green Park. The impression of spring met him everywhere, in the fragrance of the almond-trees, and the quarrelling of the sparrows, and the transparency of the blue haze over Westminster ; and, indifferent though he was to such things, there was a note of familiarity in it all that affected him strangely, and left him with a lazy sensation of pleasure. What that something was he did not realise until his eyes fell on one of the chairs under the trees, and then, as he stood quite still and wondered whether she would know him again, he discovered what there was in the air that had seemed to him so familiar and so pleasant.

"I was

"I was just thinking about you," he said deliberately, when she had shown very decidedly that she did mean to know him. He spoke with an easy indifference that she showed no signs of sharing.

"Oh, I have been wondering——" she began, in a voice that trembled with eagerness.

"Yes? Supposing we sit down. That's better. You have been wondering——?"

She leaned back in her chair, and looked up through the branches at the pale blue sky beyond. There was an odd little look of defiance on her face.

"So, after all, you did find that the Strand was the quickest way," she said abruptly.

"Possibly. And you?" he asked, with his customary smile.

"How often did you go down Oxford Street after—the last time I saw you?"

"As far as I can remember, the measure of my endurance was a week. And how much longer did you take the precaution of avoiding such a dangerous person as myself?"

She turned round and stared at him with great wondering eyes, into which a look of comprehension was slowly creeping.

"You actually thought I did that? And all the time I was ill, I was having visions of you——"

"Ill? You never told me you had been ill," he interrupted.

"You didn't exactly give me the chance, did you? It was the fog, I suppose. I am all right now. They thought I should never go down Oxford Street again. But I take a good deal of killing, and so here I am again." She ended with a cynical smile. He was making holes in the soft turf with his walking-stick. She went on speaking to the pale blue sky and the network of branches above her.

"And

"And the odd part is that I did not mind the illness so much as——" And she paused again.

"Yes?" he said, in a voice that had lost some of its jauntiness.

"I think it won't interest you."

"How can you say that unless you tell me?"

"I am sure it won't," she said decidedly. "And I couldn't possibly tell you, really."

"Go on, please," he said, looking round at her; and she went on meekly.

"The thing that bothered me was my having been cross the last time we met. You see, it was not the being cross that I minded exactly; *that* wouldn't have mattered a bit if I had seen you again the next day, but——"

"I quite understand. Bad temper is a luxury we keep for our most familiar friends. I am honoured by the distinction," he said, and his smile was not a sneer.

"I wish you wouldn't laugh at me," she said, a little wistfully.

"I am not laughing at you, child," he hastened to assure her, and he took one of her hands in his. "I have missed you, too," he went on, in a low tone that he strove to make natural.

"Did you *really*? I thought you would at first, perhaps, and then I thought you would just laugh, and forget. And you really did think of me sometimes? I am so glad."

He had a twinge of conscience. But a reputation once acquired is a tender thing, and must be handled with delicacy.

"I have not forgotten," he said, and tried to change the conversation. "And you never even told me your name, you perverse little person," he added playfully.

"You told me yours," she said, and laughed triumphantly.

"And yours, please?"

"It will quite spoil it all," she objected.

"Is it so bad as that, then? Never mind, I can bear a good deal. What is it—Susan, Jemima, Emmelina?"

There was a little pause, and then she nodded at the pale blue sky above and said "Jean" in a hurried whisper. And he was less exigent than she had been, for he did not ask for any more.

When he left her on her own doorstep she lingered for a moment in the sunlight before she went in to Nancy.

"And he really is coming to see me to-morrow," she said out loud with a joyous laugh; "I wonder, shall I tell Nancy or not?" After mature consideration she decided not to tell Nancy, though if Nancy had been less unsuspicious she would certainly have noticed something unusual in the manner of her practical little eldest sister, when she started for Berners Street on the following morning, and twice repeated that she would be back to tea should any one call and ask for her.

"Nobody is likely to ask for you," said Nancy with sisterly frankness, "nobody ever does. You needn't bother to be back to tea unless you like," she added with a self-conscious smile. "Jimmy said he might look in."

"So much the better," thought Jean; "I can bring in a cake without exciting suspicion." And she started gaily on her way, and wondered ingenuously why all the people in the street seemed so indifferent to her happiness. At Berners Street, a shock was awaiting her. Would Miss Moreen kindly stay till five to-day as the children's mother was obliged to go out, and nurse had a holiday? And as the children's mother had already gone out and nurse's holiday had begun before breakfast, there was no appeal left to poor Jean, and she settled down to her day's work with a sense of injustice in her mind and a queer feeling in her throat that had to be overcome during an arithmetic lesson. But as the day wore on her spirits rose to an unnatural pitch; she spent the
afternoon

afternoon in romping furiously with her pupils; and when five o'clock came, she was standing outside in the street counting the coins in her little purse.

"I can just do it, and I shall!" she cried, and a passing cabby pulled up in answer to her graphic appeal and carried her away westwards. He whistled when she paid him an extravagant fare, and watched her with a chuckle as she flew up the steps and fumbled nervously at the keyhole before she was able to unlock the door. He would have wondered more, or perhaps less, had he seen her standing on the mat outside the front room on the first floor, giving her hat and hair certain touches which did not affect their appearance in the least, and listening breathlessly to the sound of voices that came from within. Then she turned the handle suddenly and went in.

The lamp was not yet lighted and the daylight was waning. The room was in partial darkness, but the fire was burning brightly, and it shone on the face of a man as he leaned forward in a low chair, and talked to the beautiful girl who lay on the sofa, smiling up at him in a gentle deprecating manner, as if his homage were new and overwhelming to her.

The man was not the expected Jimmy, and Jean took two swift little steps into the room. The spell was broken and they looked round with a start.

"Oh, here you are," cried Nancy, gliding off the sofa and putting her arms round her in her pretty affectionate manner. "Poor Mr. Unwin has been waiting quite an hour for you. Whatever made you so late?"

Jean disengaged herself a little roughly, and held out her hand to Tom.

"Have you been very bored?" she asked him with a slight curl of her lip.

"That

"That could hardly be the case in Miss Nancy's company," he replied in his best manner; "but if she had not been so kind to me your tardiness in coming would certainly have been harder to bear."

The carefully picked words did not come naturally from the boyish fellow who had talked slang to her on the top of the omnibus, but Tom Unwin never talked slang when there was a situation of any kind. Jean was bitterly conscious of being the only one of the three who was not behaving in a picturesque manner. The other two vied with each other in showing her little attentions, a fact that entirely failed to deceive her.

"Do they think I am a fool?" she thought scornfully. "Why should they suppose that I need propitiating?"

And she insisted curtly on pouring out her own cup of tea, and sat down obstinately on a high chair, without noticing the low one he was pulling forward for her.

"Don't let me disturb you," she said calmly; "you made such a charming picture when I came in."

They only seemed to her to be making a ridiculous picture now. She was conscious of nothing but the satirical view of the situation, and she had a mad desire to point at them and scream with laughter at their fatuity in supposing that she did not see through their discomfiture.

"We thought you were never coming," began Nancy in her gentle tired voice; "I was afraid you had been taken ill or something."

"Yes, indeed," added Tom with strained jocularly; "it was all I could do to restrain Miss Nancy from sending a telegram to somebody about you. She only gave up the idea when I got her to acknowledge that she didn't even know where to send it."

"Now,

"Now, that is really too bad of you," exclaimed Nancy with a carefully studied pout; "you know quite well——"

"Indeed, I appeal to you, Miss Moreen——"

"Don't listen to him, Jean."

"It doesn't seem to me to matter very much," said Jean with much composure; "I am very glad that I gave you so much to talk about."

They made another attempt to conciliate her.

"Do have some cake. It isn't bad," said Nancy invitingly.

"Or some more tea?" added Tom anxiously. "You must be so played out with your long day's work. Have the little brats been very trying?"

"Oh, you needn't worry about the little brats, thanks," said Jean, eating bread and butter voraciously for the sake of an occupation.

"Come nearer the fire," said Nancy coaxingly; "Mr Unwin will move up that other chair."

"Of course," said Mr. Unwin with alacrity, glad of any excuse that removed him for a moment from the unpleasant scrutiny of her large cold eyes.

"You are both very kind to bother about me like this. I am really not used to it," said Jean with a hard little laugh. "Won't you go on with your conversation while I write a postcard?"

She made a place for her cup on the tea-tray, strolled across the room to the bureau, and sat down to look vacantly at a blank postcard. The other two seated themselves stiffly at opposite ends of the hearthrug, and manufactured stilted phrases for the ears of Jean.

"Your sister draws, I believe?"

"Oh, yes. Jean is fearfully clever, you know. She used to win prizes and things. I never won a prize in my life. Oh, yes; Jean is certainly very clever indeed."

"I am

"I am sure of it. It must be charming to be so clever."

"Yes. Nothing else matters if you are as clever as all that. It doesn't affect Jean in the least if things happen to go wrong, because she always has her cleverness to console her, don't you see."

"Brains are a perennial consolation," said Tom solemnly ; "I always knew, Miss Nancy, that your sister was very exceptional."

"Exceptional ! Yes, I suppose I am that," thought Jean with a curious feeling of dissatisfaction. The burden of her own cleverness was almost too much for her, and she would have given worlds, just then, to have been as ordinary as Nancy—and as beautiful.

"Will you forgive me if I go upstairs and finish a drawing ?" she said, coming forward into the firelight again. They uttered some conventional regrets, and Tom held the door open for her. "Good-bye," she said, smiling, "I am sorry my drawing won't wait. It has to go in to-morrow morning."

"I envy you your charming talent," he said with a sigh that was a little overdone.

"Do you ? It prevents me from being domesticated, you know, and that is always a pity, isn't it ?" she said, and drew her hand away quickly.

Upstairs with her head on an old brown cloak she lay and listened to the hum of voices below.

"Why wasn't I born a fool with a pretty face ?" she murmured. "Fools are the only really happy people in the world, for they are the only people the rest of us have the capacity to understand. And to be understood by the majority of people is the whole secret of happiness. No one would take the trouble to understand *me*. Of course it is unbearably conceited to say so, but there is no one to hear."

When

When Nancy came up to bed, she found her sister working away steadily at her drawing.

"It was very mean of you to leave me so long with that man, Jean; he stayed quite an hour after you left," she said, suppressing a yawn.

"Oh, I thought you wouldn't mind; I don't get on with him half so well as you do. Stand out of the light, will you?"

"He thinks you're immensely clever," said Nancy; "he says he never met any one so determined and plucky in his life. Of course you will get on, he says."

"Yes," said Jean with a strange smile, as she nibbled the top of her pencil; "I suppose I shall get on. And to the end of my days people will admire me from a distance, and talk about my talent and my determination, just as they talk about your beauty and your womanly ways. That is so like the world; it always associates us with a certain atmosphere and never admits the possibility of any other."

Nancy was perched on the end of the bed in her white peignoir, with her knees up to her chin and a puzzled expression on her face.

"How queer you are to-night, Jean," she said; "I don't think I understand."

"My atmosphere," continued Jean in the same passionless tone, "is the clever and capable one. It is the one that is always reserved for the unattractive people who have understanding, the sort of people who know all there is to know, from observation, and never get the chance of experiencing one jot of it. They are the people who learn about life from the outside; and remain half alive themselves to the end of time. Nobody would think of falling in love with them, and they don't even know how to be lovable. It is a very clinging atmosphere," she added sadly; "I shall never shake it off."

Nancy

Nancy stopped making a becoming wreck of her coils of hair, and looked more bewildered than before.

"I don't understand, Jean," she said again.

Jean looked at her for a moment with eyes full of admiration.

"Don't worry about it, child," she said slowly ; "you will never have to understand."

The Forge

By Grosvenor Thomas



Three Prose Fancies

By Richard Le Gallienne

I—A Poet in the City

"In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray."

I (and when I say I, I must be understood to be speaking dramatically) I only venture into the City once a year, for the very pleasant purpose of drawing that twelve-pound-ten by which the English nation, ever so generously sensitive to the necessities, not to say luxuries, of the artist, endeavours to express its pride and delight in me. It would be a very graceful exercise of gratitude for me here to stop and parenthesise the reader on the subject of all that twelve-pound-ten has been to me, how it has quite changed the course of my life; given me that long-desired opportunity of doing my best work in peace, for which so often I vainly sighed in Fleet Street, and even allowed me an indulgence in minor luxuries which I could not have dreamed of enjoying before the days of that twelve-pound-ten. Now not only peace and plenty, but leisure and luxury are mine. There is nothing goes so far as—Government money.

Usually on these literally State occasions, I drive up in state, that

is

is in a hansom. There is only one other day in the year in which I am so splendid, but that is another beautiful story. It, too, is a day and an hour too joyous to be approached otherwise than on winged wheels, too stately to be approached in merely pedestrian fashion. To go on foot to draw one's pension seems a sort of slight on the great nation that does one honour, as though a Lord Mayor should make his appearance in the procession in his office coat.

So I say it is my custom to go gaily, and withal stately, to meet my twelve-pound-ten in a hansom. For many reasons the occasion always seems something of an adventure, and I confess I always feel a little excited about it, indeed, to tell the truth, a little nervous. As I glide along in my state barge (which seems a much more proper and impressive image for a hansom than "gondola," with its reminiscences of Earl's Court) I feel like some fragile country flower torn from its roots, and bewilderingly hurried along upon the turbid, swollen stream of London life.

The stream glides sweetly with a pleasant trotting tinkle of bells by the green park-side of Piccadilly, and sweet is it to hear the sirens singing and to see them combing their gilded locks on the yellow sands of Piccadilly Circus—so called, no doubt, from the number of horses and the skill of their drivers. Here are the whirling pools of pleasure, merry wheels of laughing waters, where your hansom glides along with a golden ease—it is only when you enter the First Cataract of the Strand that you become aware of the far-distant terrible roar of the Falls! They are yet nearly two miles away, but already, like Niagara, thou hearest the sound thereof—the fateful sound of that human Niagara, where all the great rivers of London converge: the dark, strong floods surging out from the gloomy fastnesses of the East End, the quick-running streams from the palaces of the West, the East with its waggons, the West with its hansoms, the four winds with their omnibusses,
the

the horses and carriages under the earth jetting up their companies of grimy passengers; the very air busy with a million errands.

You are in the rapids, metaphorically speaking, as you crawl down Cheapside, and there where the Bank of England and the Mansion House rise sheer and awful from, shall we say, this boiling cauldron, this "hell" of angry meeting waters—Threadneedle Street and Cornhill, Queen Victoria Street and Cheapside, each "running," again metaphorically, "like a mill race"—here in this wild maelström of human life and human conveyances, here is the true "Niagara in London," here are the most wonderful falls in the world—the London Falls.

"Yes!" I said softly to myself, and I could see the sly, sad smile on the face of the dead poet, at the thought of whose serene wisdom a silence like snow seemed momentarily to cover up the turmoil—"Yes!" I said softly, "there is still the same old crush at the corner of Fenchurch Street!"

By this time I had disbursed one of my two annual cab fares, and was standing a little forlorn at that very corner. It was a March afternoon, bitter and gloomy; lamps were already popping alight in a desolate way, and the east wind whistled mournfully through the ribs of the passers-by. A very unflower-like man was dejectedly calling out "daffadowndillies" close by. The sound of the pretty old word thus quaintly spoken, brightened the air better than the electric lights which suddenly shot rows of wintry moonlight along the streets. I bought a bunch of the poor, pinched flowers, and asked the man how he came to call them "daffadowndillies."

"D'vunshire," he said, in anything but a Devonshire accent, and then the east wind took him and he was gone—doubtless to a neighbouring tavern; and no wonder, poor soul. Flowers certainly fall into strange hands here in London.

Well,

The more people buffeted against me the more I felt this crushing sense of almost cosmic forces. Everybody was so plainly an atom in a public company, a drop of water in a tyrannous stream of human energy—companies that cared nothing for their individual atoms, streams that cared nothing for their component drops; such atoms and drops, for the most part to be had for

for thirty shillings a week. These people about me seemed no more like individual men and women than individual puffs in a mighty rushing wind, or the notes in a great scheme of music, are men and women—to the banker so many pens with ears whereon to perch them, to the capitalist so many “hands,” and to the City man generally so many “helpless pieces of the game he plays” up there in spidery nooks and corners of the City.

As I listened to the throbbing of the great human engines in the buildings about me, a rising and a falling there seemed as of those great steel-limbed monsters, weird contortionists of metal, that jet up and down, and writhe and wrestle this way and that behind the long glass windows of great water-towers, or toil like Vulcan in the bowels of mighty ships—an expression of frenzy seems to come up even from the dumb tossing steel, sometimes it seems to be shaking great knuckled fists at one and brandishing threatening arms, as it strains and sweats beneath the lash of the compulsive steam. As one watches it there seems something of human agony about its panic-stricken labours, and something like a sense of pity surprises one—a sense of pity that anything in the world should have to work like that, even steel, even, as we say, senseless steel. What, then, of these great human engine houses! Will the engines always consent to rise and fall, night and day, like that? or will there some day be a mighty convulsion, and this blind Samson of labour pull down the whole engine-house upon his oppressors? Who knows? These are questions for great politicians and thinkers to decide, not for a poet, who is too much terrified by these forces to be able calmly to estimate and prophesy concerning them.

Yes! if you want to realise Tennyson's picture of “one poor poet's scroll” ruling the world, take your poet's scroll down to Fenchurch Street and try it there. Ah, what a powerless little
“private

“private interest” seems poetry there, poetry “whose action is no stronger than a flower.” In days of peace it ventures even into the morning papers, but let only a rumour of war be heard and it vanishes like a dream on doomsday morning. A County Council Election passeth over it and it is gone.

Yet it was near this very spot that Keats dug up the buried beauty of Greece, lying hidden beneath Finsbury Pavement! and in the deserted City churches great dramatists lie about us. Maybe I have wronged the City—and at this thought I remembered a little bookshop but a few yards away, blossoming like a rose right in the heart of the wilderness.

Here, after all, in spite of all my whirlpools and engine-houses, was for me the greatest danger in the City. Need I say, therefore, that I promptly sought it, hovered about it a moment—and entered. How much of that grateful governmental twelve-pound-ten came out alive, I dare not tell my dearest friend.

At all events I came out somehow reassured, more rich in faith. There was a might of poesy after all. There were words in the little yellow-leaved garland, nestling like a bird in my hand, that would outlast the bank yonder, and outlive us all. I held it up. How tiny it seemed, how frail amid all this stone and iron. A mere flower—a flower from the seventeenth century—long-lived for a flower! Yes, an *immortelle*.

II—Variations upon Whitebait

A VERY Pre-Raphaelite friend of mine came to me one day and said apropos of his having designed a very Early English chair: “After all, if one has anything to say one might as well put it into a chair!”

I thought

I thought the remark rather delicious, as also his other remark when one day in a curiosity-shop we were looking at another chair, which the dealer declared to be Norman. My friend seated himself in it very gravely, and after softly moving about from side to side, testing it, it would appear, by the sensation it imparted to the sitting portion of his limbs, he solemnly decided "I don't think the *flavour* of this chair is Norman!"

I thought of this Pre-Raphaelite brother as the Sphinx and I were seated a few evenings ago at our usual little dinner, in our usual little sheltered corner, on the Lover's Gallery of one of the great London restaurants. The Sphinx says that there is only one place in Europe where one can really dine, but as it is impossible to be always within reasonable train service of that Montsalvat of cookery, she consents to eat with me—she cannot call it dine—at the restaurant of which I speak. I being very simple-minded, untravelled, and unlanguageed, think it, in my Cockney heart, a very fine place indeed, with its white marble pillars surrounding the spacious peristyle, and flashing with a thousand brilliant lights and colours; with its stately cooks, clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful, ranged behind a great altar loaded with big silver dishes, and the sacred musicians of the temple ranged behind them—while in and out go the waiters clothed in white and black, waiters so good and kind that I am compelled to think of Elijah being waited on by angels.

They have such an eye for a romance, too, and really take it personally to heart if it should befall that our little table is usurped by others that know not love. I like them, too, because they really seem to have an eye for the strange beauty and charm of the Sphinx, quite an unexpected taste for Botticelli. They ill conceal their envy of my lot, and sometimes in the meditative pauses between the courses I see them romantically reckoning how it might be possible
by

by desperately saving up, by prodigious windfalls of tips, from unexampled despatch and sweetness in their ministrations, how it might be possible in ten years' time, perhaps even in five—the lady would wait five years! and her present lover could be artistically poisoned meanwhile!—how it might be possible to come and sue for her beautiful hand. Then a harsh British cry for “waiter” comes like a rattle and scares away that beautiful dream-bird, though, as the poor dreamer speeds on the quest of roast beef for four, you can see it still circling with its wonderful blue feathers around his pomatumed head.

Ah, yes, the waiters know that the Sphinx is no ordinary woman. She cannot conceal even from them the mystical star of her face; they too catch far echoes of the strange music of her brain; they too grow dreamy with dropped hints of fragrance from the rose of her wonderful heart.

How reverently do they help her doff her little cloak of silk and lace; with what a worshipful inclination of the head, as in the presence of a deity, do they await her verdict of choice between rival soups—shall it be “clear or thick?” And when she decides on “thick” how relieved they seem to be, as if—well, some few matters remain undecided in the universe, but never mind, this is settled for ever—no more doubts possible on one portentous issue, at any rate—Madame will take her soup “thick.”

“On such a night” our talk fell upon whitebait.

As the Sphinx's silver fork rustled among the withered silver upon her plate, she turned to me and said:

“Have you ever thought what beautiful little things these whitebait are?”

“Oh, yes,” I replied, “they are the daisies of the deep sea, the threepenny-pieces of the ocean.”

“You dear!” said the Sphinx, who is alone in the world in thinking

thinking me awfully clever. "Go on, say something else, something pretty about whitebait—there's a subject for you!"

Then it was that, fortunately, I remembered my Pre-Raphaelite friend, and I sententiously remarked: "Of course, if one has anything to say one cannot do better than say it about whitebait. . . . Well, whitebait. . . ."

But here, providentially, the band of the beef—that is, the band behind the beef; that is, the band that nightly hymns the beef (the phrase is to be had in three qualities)—struck up the overture from "Tannhäuser," which is not the only music that makes the Sphinx forget my existence; and thus, forgetting me, she momentarily forgot the whitebait. But I remembered, remembered hard—worked at pretty things, as metal-workers punch out their flowers of brass and copper. The music swirled about us like golden waves, in which swam myriad whitebait, like showers of tiny stars, like falling snow. To me it was one grand procession of whitebait, silver ripples upon streams of gold.

The music stopped. The Sphinx turned to me with the soul of Wagner in her eyes, and then she turned to the waiter: "Would it be possible," she said, "to persuade the bandmaster to play that wonderful thing over again?"

The waiter seemed a little doubtful, even for the Sphinx, but he went off to the bandmaster with the air of a man who has at last an opportunity to show that he can dare all for love. Personally, I have a suspicion that he poured his month's savings at the bandmaster's feet, and begged him to do this thing for the most wonderful lady in the world; or perhaps the bandmaster was really a musician, and his musician's heart was touched—lonely there amid the beef—to think that there was really some one, invisible though she were to him, some shrouded silver presence, up there among the beefeaters, who really loved to hear great music.

Perhaps

Perhaps it was thus made a night he has never forgotten ; perhaps it changed the whole course of his life—who knows ? The sweet reassuring request may have come to him at a moment when, sick of heart, he was deciding to abandon real music for ever, and settle down amid the beef and the beef-music of Old England.

Well, however it was, the waiter came back radiant with a "Yes" on every shining part of him, and if the "Tannhäuser" had been played well at first, certainly the orchestra surpassed themselves this second time.

When the great jinnée of music had once more passed out of the hall, the Sphinx turned with shining eyes to the waiter :

"Take," she said, "take these tears to the bandmaster. He has indeed earned them."

"Tears, little one," I said. "See how they swim like whitebait in the fishpools of your eyes ! " "

"Oh, yes, the whitebait," rejoined the Sphinx, glad of a subject to hide her emotion. "Now tell me something nice about them, though the poor little things have long since disappeared. Tell me, for instance, how they get their beautiful little silver water-proofs ? "

"Electric Light of the World," I said, "it is like this. While they are still quite young and full of dreams, their mother takes them out in picnic parties of a billion or so at a time to where the spring moon is shining, scattering silver from its purse of pearl far over the wide waters, silver, silver, for every little whitebait that cares to swim and pick it up. The mother, who has a contract with some such big restaurateur as ours here, chooses a convenient area of moonlight, and then at a given sign they all turn over on their sides, and bask and bask in the rays, little fin pressed lovingly against little fin—for this is the happiest time in the young whitebait's life : it is at these silvering parties that matches are made
and

and future consignments of whitebait arranged for. Well, night after night, they thus lie in the moonlight, first on one side, then on the other, till by degrees, tiny scale by scale, they have become completely lunar-plated. Ah! how sad they are when the end of that happy time has come."

"And what happens to them after that?" asked the Sphinx.

"One night when the moon is hidden their mother comes to them with treacherous wile, and suggests that they should go off on a holiday again to seek the moon—the moon that for a moment seems captured by the pearl-fishers of the sky. And so off they go merrily, but, alas, no moon appears, and presently they are aware of unwieldly bumping presences upon the surface of the sea, presences as of huge dolphins, and rough voices call across the water, till, scared, the little whitebaits turn home in flight—to find themselves somehow meshed in an invisible prison, a net as fine and strong as air, into which, O agony, they are presently hauled, lovely banks of silver, shining like opened coffers beneath the coarse and ragged flares of yellow torches. The rest is silence."

"What sad little lives! and what a cruel world it is!" said the Sphinx—as she crunched with her knife through the body of a lark, that but yesterday had been singing in the blue sky. Its spirit sang just above our heads as she ate, and the air was thick with the grey ghosts of all the whitebait she had eaten that night.

But there were no longer any tears in her eyes.

III—A Seaport in the Moon

No one is so hopelessly wrong about the stars as the astronomer, and I trust that you never pay any attention to his remarks on the moon. He knows as much about the moon as a coiffeur knows
of

of the dreams of the fair lady whose beautiful neck he makes still more beautiful. There is but one opinion upon the moon—namely, our own. And if you think that science is thus wronged, reflect a moment upon what science makes of things near at hand. Love, it says, is merely a play of pistil and stamen, our most fascinating poetry and art is “degeneration,” and human life, generally speaking, is sufficiently explained by the “carbon compounds”—God-a-mercy! If science makes such grotesque blunders about radiant matters right under its nose, how can one think of taking its opinion upon matters so remote as the stars—or even the moon, which is comparatively near at hand?

Science says that the moon is a dead world, a cosmic ship littered with the skeletons of its crew, and from which every rat of vitality has long since escaped. It is the ghost that rises from its tomb, every night to haunt its faithless lover, the world. It is a country of ancient silver mines, unworked for centuries. You may see the gaping mouths of the dark old shafts through your telescopes. You may even see the rusting pit tackle, the ruinous engine-houses, and the idle pick and shovel. Or you may say that it is counterfeit silver, coined to take in the young fools who love to gaze upon it. It is, so to speak, a bad half-a-crown.

As you will! but I am of Endymion's belief—and no one was ever more intimate with the moon. For me the moon is a country of great seaports, whither all the ships of our dreams come home. From all quarters of the world, every day of the week, there are ships sailing to the moon. They are the ships that sail just when and where you please. You take your passage on that condition. And it is ridiculous to think for what a trifle the captain will take you on so long a journey. If you want to come back, just to take an excursion and no more, just to take a lighted look at those coasts of rose and pearl, he will ask no more than

than a glass or two of bright wine ; indeed, when the captain is very kind, a flower will take you there and back in no time ; if you want to stay whole days there, but still come back dreamy and strange, you may take a little dark root and smoke it in a silver pipe, or you may drink a little phial of poppy-juice, and thus you shall find the Land of Heart's Desire ; but if you are wise and would stay in that land forever, the terms are even easier : a little powder shaken into a phial of water, a little piece of lead no bigger than a pea and a farthing's worth of explosive fire, and thus also you are in the Land of Heart's Desire for ever.

I dreamed last night that I stood on the blustering windy wharf, and the dark ship was there. It was impatient, like all of us, to leave the world. Its funnels belched black smoke, its engines throbbed against the quay like arms that were eager to strike and be done, and a bell was beating impatient summons to be gone. The dark captain stood ready on the bridge, and he looked into each of our faces as we passed on board. "Is it for the long voyage?" he said. "Yes! the long voyage," I said—and his stern eyes seemed to soften as I answered.

At last we were all aboard, and in the twinkling of an eye were out of sight of land. Yet, once afloat, it seemed as though we should never reach our port in the moon—so it seemed to me as I lay awake in my little cabin, listening to the patient thud and throb of the great screws, beating in the ship's side like a human heart.

Talking with my fellow-voyagers, I was surprised to find that we were not all volunteers. Some in fact complained pitifully. They had, they said, been going about their business a day or two before, and suddenly a mysterious captain had laid hold of them, and pressed them to sail this unknown sea. Thus, without a word of warning, they had been compelled to leave behind them all they held dear. This one felt was a little hard of the captain ;
but

but those of us whose position was exactly the reverse, who had friends on the other side, all whose hopes indeed were invested there, were too selfishly expectant of port to be severe on the captain who was taking us thither.

There were three friends I had especially set out to see : two young lovers who had emigrated to those colonies in the moon just after their marriage, and there was another. What a surprise it would be to all three, for I had written no letter to say I was coming. Indeed, it was just a sudden impulse, the pistol flash of a long desire.

I tried to imagine what the town would be like in which they were now living. I asked the captain, and he answered with a sad smile, that it would be just exactly as I cared to dream it.

"O, well then," I thought, "I know what it will be like. There shall be a great restless, tossing estuary, with Atlantic winds for ever ruffling the sails of busy ships, ships coming home with laughter, ships leaving home with sad sea-gull cries of farewell. And the shaggy tossing water shall be bounded on either bank with high granite walls, and on one bank shall be a fretted spire soaring with a jangle of bells, from amid a tangle of masts, and underneath the bells and the masts shall go streets rising up from the strand, streets full of faces, and sweet with the smell of tar and the sea. O, captain, will it be morning or night when we come to my city ? In the morning my city is like a sea-blown rose, in the night it is bright as a sailor's star.

"If it be early morning, what shall I do ? I will run to the house in which my friends lie in happy sleep, never to be parted again, and kiss my hand to their shrouded window ; and then I will run on and on till the city is behind and the sweetness of country lanes is about me, and I will gather flowers as I run, from sheer wantonness of joy, and then at last, flushed and breathless, I will stand

stand beneath her window. I shall stand and listen, and I shall hear her breathing right through the heavy curtains, and the hushed garden and the sleeping house will bid me keep silence, but I shall cry a great cry up to the morning star, and say, 'No, I will not keep silence. Mine is the voice she listens for in her sleep. She will wake again for no voice but mine. Dear one, awake, the morning of all mornings has come!'

As I write, the moon looks down at me like a Madonna from the great canvas of the sky. She seems beautiful with the beauty of all the eyes that have looked up at her, sad with all the tears of all those eyes; like a silver bowl brimming with the tears of dead lovers she seems. Yes, there are scaports in the moon, there are ships to take us there.

Geisha

By E. Hornel



Rain

From the French of
Emile Verhaeren
By Alma Strettell

LONG as unending threads, the long-drawn rain
Interminably, with its nails of grey,
Athwart the dull grey day,
Rakes the green window-pane—
So infinitely, endlessly, the rain,
The long, long rain,
The rain.

Since yesternight it keeps unravelling
Down from the frayed and flaccid rags that cling
About the sullen sky,
The low black sky ;
Since yesternight, so slowly, patiently,
Unravelling its threads upon the roads,
Upon the roads and lanes, with even fall
Continual.

Along the miles
That 'twixt the meadows and the suburbs lie,
By roads interminably bent, the files

OF

Of waggons, with their awnings arched and tall,
Struggling in sweat and steam, toil slowly by
With outline vague as of a funeral.
Into the ruts, unbroken, regular,
Stretching out parallel so far
That when night comes they seem to join the sky,
For hours the water drips ;
And every tree and every dwelling weeps,
Drenched as they are with it,
With the long rain, tenaciously, with rain
Indefinite.

The rivers, through each rotten dyke that yields,
Discharge their swollen wave upon the fields,
Where coils of drowned hay
Float far away ;
And the wild breeze
Buffets the alders and the walnut trees ;
Knee-deep in water great black oxen stand,
Lifting their bellowings sinister on high
To the distorted sky ;
As now the night creeps onward, all the land,
Thicket and plain,
Grows cumbered with her clinging shades immense,
And still there is the rain,
The long, long rain,
Like soot, so fine and dense.

The long, long rain,
Rain—and its threads identical,
And its nails systematical,

Weaving

Weaving the garment, mesh by mesh amain,
 Of destitution for each house and wall,
 And fences that enfold
 The villages, neglected, grey, and old :
 Chaplets of rags and linen shreds that fall
 In frayed-out wisps from upright poles and tall,
 Blue pigeon-houses glued against the thatch,
 And windows with a patch
 Of dingy paper on each lowering pane,
 Houses with straight-set gutters, side by side,
 Across the broad stone gambles crucified,
 Mills, uniform, forlorn,
 Each rising from its hillock like a horn,
 Steeples afar and chapels round about,
 The rain, the long, long rain,
 Through all the winter wears and wears them out.

Rain, the long rain,
 With wrinkles, and grey nails, and watery strands
 Of hair that downward flow,
 The long rain of these old, old lands,
 Eternal, torpid, slow !

Portrait of a Lady

By George Henry



A Slip under the Microscope

By H. G. Wells

OUTSIDE the laboratory windows was a watery-grey fog, and within a close warmth and the yellow light of the green-shaded gas lamps that stood two to each table down its narrow length. On each table stood a couple of glass jars containing the mangled vestiges of the crayfish, mussels, frogs, and guinea-pigs, upon which the students had been working, and down the side of the room, facing the windows, were shelves bearing bleached dissections in spirits, surmounted by a row of beautifully executed anatomical drawings in whitewood frames and overhanging a row of cubical lockers. All the doors of the laboratory were panelled with blackboard, and on these were the half-erased diagrams of the previous day's work. The laboratory was empty, save for the demonstrator, who sat near the preparation-room door, and silent, save for a low, continuous murmur, and the clicking of the rocker microtome at which he was working. But scattered about the room were traces of numerous students: hand-bags, polished boxes of instruments, in one place a large drawing covered by a newspaper, and in another a prettily bound copy of *News from Nowhere*, a book oddly at variance with its surroundings. These things had been put down hastily as the students had arrived and hurried at once to secure their seats in the adjacent lecture theatre.

Deadened

Deafened by the closed door, the measured accents of the professor sounded as a featureless muttering.

Presently, faint through the closed windows came the sound of the Oratory clock striking the hour of eleven. The clicking of the microtome ceased, and the demonstrator looked at his watch, rose, thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked slowly down the laboratory towards the lecture theatre door. He stood listening for a moment, and then his eye fell on the little volume by William Morris. He picked it up, glanced at the title, smiled, opened it, looked at the name on the fly-leaf, ran the leaves through with his hand, and put it down. Almost immediately the even murmur of the lecturer ceased, there was a sudden burst of pencils rattling on the desks in the lecture theatre, a stirring, a scraping of feet, and a number of voices speaking together. Then a firm footfall approached the door, which began to open, and stood ajar, as some indistinctly heard question arrested the new comer.

The demonstrator turned, walked slowly back past the microtome, and left the laboratory by the preparation-room door. As he did so, first one, and then several students carrying notebooks, entered the laboratory from the lecture theatre and distributed themselves among the little tables, or stood in a group about the doorway. They were an exceptionally heterogeneous assembly, for while Oxford and Cambridge still recoil from the blushing prospect of mixed classes, the College of Science anticipated America in the matter years ago—mixed socially, too, for the prestige of the College is high and its scholarships, free of any age limit, dredge deeper even than do those of the Scotch universities. The class numbered one-and-twenty, but some remained in the theatre questioning the professor, copying the blackboard diagrams before they were washed off, or examining the special specimens he had produced

produced to illustrate the day's teaching. Of the nine who had come into the laboratory three were girls, one of whom, a little fair woman, wearing spectacles and dressed in greyish-green, was peering out of the window at the fog, while the other two, both wholesome-looking, plain-faced schoolgirls, unrolled and put on the brown holland aprons they wore while dissecting. Of the men, two went down the laboratory and sat down in their places, one, a pallid, dark-bearded man, who had once been a tailor; the other a pleasant-featured, ruddy young man of twenty, dressed in a well-fitting brown suit; young Wedderburn, the son of Wedderburn the eye specialist. The others formed a little knot near the theatre door. One of these, a dwarfed, spectacled figure, with a hunch back, sat on a bent wood stool; two others, one a short, dark youngster, and the other a flaxen-haired, reddish-complexioned young man, stood leaning side by side against the slate sink, while the fourth stood facing them, and maintained the larger share of the conversation.

This last person was named Hill. He was a sturdily built young fellow, of the same age as Wedderburn; he had a white face, dark grey eyes, hair of an indeterminate colour, and prominent, irregular features. He talked rather louder than was needful, and thrust his hands deeply into his pockets. His collar was frayed and blue with the starch of a careless laundress, his clothes were evidently ready-made, and there was a patch on the side of his boot near the toe. And as he talked or listened to the others, he glanced now and again towards the lecture theatre door. They were discussing the depressing peroration of the lecture they had just heard, the last lecture it was in the introductory course in zoology. "From ovum to ovum is the goal of the higher vertebrata," the lecturer had said in his melancholy tones, and so had neatly rounded off the sketch of comparative anatomy

he

he had been developing. The spectacled hunchback had repeated it, with noisy appreciation, had tossed it towards the fair-haired student with an evident provocation, and had started one of those vague, rambling discussions on generalities, so unaccountably dear to the student mind all the world over.

"That is our goal, perhaps—I admit it—as far as science goes," said the fair-haired student, rising to the challenge. "But there are things above science."

"Science," said Hill, confidently, "is systematic knowledge. Ideas that don't come into the system—must anyhow—be loose ideas." He was not quite sure whether that was a clever saying or a fatuity until his hearers took it seriously.

"The thing I cannot understand," said the hunchback, at large, "is whether Hill is a materialist or not."

"There is one thing above matter," said Hill, promptly, feeling he had a better thing this time, aware, too, of someone in the doorway behind him, and raising his voice a trifle for her benefit, "and that is, the delusion that there is something above matter."

"So we have your gospel at last," said the fair student. "It's all a delusion, is it? All our aspirations to lead something more than dogs' lives, all our work for anything beyond ourselves. But see how inconsistent you are. Your socialism, for instance. Why do you trouble about the interests of the race? Why do you concern yourself about the beggar in the gutter? Why are you bothering yourself to lend that book"—he indicated William Morris by a movement of the head—"to everyone in the lab.?"

"Girl," said the hunchback, indistinctly, and glanced guiltily over his shoulder.

The girl in brown, with the brown eyes, had come into the laboratory, and stood on the other side of the table behind him, with her rolled-up apron in one hand, looking over her shoulder, listening

listening to the discussion. She did not notice the hunchback, because she was glancing from Hill to his interlocutor. Hill's consciousness of her presence betrayed itself to her only in his studious ignorance of the fact; but she understood that, and it pleased her. "I see no reason," said he, "why a man should live like a brute because he knows of nothing beyond matter, and does not expect to exist a hundred years hence."

"Why shouldn't he?" said the fair-haired student.

"Why *should* he?" said Hill.

"What inducement has he?"

"That's the way with all you religious people. It's all a business of inducements. Cannot a man seek after righteousness for righteousness' sake?"

There was a pause. The fair man answered with a kind of vocal padding, "But—you see—inducement—when I said inducement," to gain time. And then the hunchback came to his rescue and inserted a question. He was a terrible person in the debating society with his questions, and they invariably took one form—a demand for a definition. "What's your definition of righteousness?" said the hunchback at this stage.

Hill experienced a sudden loss of complacency at this question, but even as it was asked relief came in the person of Brooks, the laboratory attendant, who entered by the preparation-room door, carrying a number of freshly killed guinea-pigs by their hind legs. "This is the last batch of material this session," said the youngster, who had not previously spoken. Brooks advanced up the laboratory, smacking down a couple of guinea-pigs at each table. The rest of the class, scenting the prey from afar, came crowding in by the lecture theatre door, and the discussion perished abruptly as the students who were not already in their places hurried to them to secure the choice of a specimen. There was a noise of keys rattling
on

on split rings as lockers were opened and dissecting instruments taken out. Hill was already standing by his table, and his box of scalpels was sticking out of his pocket. The girl in brown came a step towards him, and, leaning over his table, said softly: "Did you see that I returned your book, Mr. Hill?"

During the whole scene she and the book had been vividly present in his consciousness; but he made a clumsy pretence of looking at the book and seeing it for the first time. "Oh, yes," he said, taking it up. "I see. Did you like it?"

"I want to ask you some questions about it—sometime."

"Certainly," said Hill. "I shall be glad." He stopped awkwardly. "You liked it?" he said.

"It's a wonderful book. Only some things I don't understand."

Then suddenly the laboratory was hushed by a curious braying noise. It was the demonstrator. He was at the blackboard ready to begin the day's instruction, and it was his custom to demand silence by a sound midway between the "Er" of common intercourse and the blast of a trumpet. The girl in brown slipped back to her place; it was immediately in front of Hill's, and Hill, forgetting her forthwith, took a note-book out of the drawer of his table, turned over its leaves hastily, drew a stumpy pencil from his pocket, and prepared to make a copious note of the coming demonstration. For demonstrations and lectures are the sacred text of the college students. Books, saving only the Professor's own, you may—it is even expedient to—ignore.

Hill was the son of a Landport cobbler, and had been hooked by a chance blue paper the authorities had thrown out to the Landport Technical College. He kept himself in London on his allowance of a guinea a week, and found that, with proper care,
this

this also covered his clothing allowance, an occasional waterproof collar, that is ; and ink and needles and cotton, and such-like necessities for a man about town. This was his first year and his first session, but the brown old man in Landport had already got himself detested in many public-houses by boasting of his son, "the professor." Hill was a vigorous youngster, with a serene contempt for the clergy of all denominations, and a fine ambition to reconstruct the world. He regarded his scholarship as a brilliant opportunity. He had begun to read at seven, and had read steadily whatever came in his way, good or bad, since then. His worldly experience had been limited to the Island of Portsea, and acquired chiefly in the wholesale boot factory in which he had worked by day, after passing the seventh standard of the Board school. He had a considerable gift of speech, as the College Debating Society, which met amidst the crushing machines and mine models in the metallurgical theatre downstairs, already recognised, recognised by a violent battering of desks whenever he rose. And he was just at that fine emotional age when life opens at the end of a narrow pass like a broad valley at one's feet, full of the promise of wonderful discoveries and tremendous achievements. And his own limitations, save that he knew that he knew neither Latin nor French, were all unknown to him.

At first his interest had been divided pretty equally between his biological work at the College and social and theological theorising, an employment which he took in deadly earnest. Of a night, when the big museum library was not open, he would sit on the bed of his room in Chelsea with his coat and a muffler on, and write out the lecture notes and revise his dissection memoranda, until Thorpe called him out by a whistle—the landlady objected to open the door to attic visitors—and then the two would go prowling

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prowl about the shadowy, shiny, gas-lit streets, talking, very much in the fashion of the sample just given, of the God Idea, and Righteousness, and Carlyle, and the Reorganisation of Society. And, in the midst of it all, Hill, arguing not only for Thorpe, but for the casual passer-by, would lose the thread of his argument glancing at some pretty painted face that looked meaningfully at him as he passed. Science and Righteousness! But once or twice lately there had been signs that a third interest was creeping into his life, and he had found his attention wandering from the fate of the mesoblastic somites or the probable meaning of the blastopore, to the thought of the girl with the brown eyes who sat at the table before him.

She was a paying student; she descended inconceivable social altitudes to speak to him. At the thought of the education she must have had, and the accomplishments she must possess, the soul of Hill became abject within him. She had spoken to him first over a difficulty about the alisphenoid of a rabbit's skull, and he had found that, in biology at least, he had no reason for self-abasement. And from that, after the manner of young people starting from any starting-point, they got to generalities, and while Hill attacked her upon the question of socialism—some instinct told him to spare her a direct assault upon her religion—she was gathering resolution to undertake what she told herself was his æsthetic education. She was a year or two older than he, though the thought never occurred to him. The loan of *News from Nowhere* was the beginning of a series of cross loans. Upon some absurd first principle of his, Hill had never "wasted time" upon poetry, and it seemed an appalling deficiency to her. One day in the lunch hour, when she chanced upon him alone in the little museum where the skeletons were arranged, shamefully eating the bun that constituted his midday meal, she retreated, and
returned

returned to lend him, with a slightly furtive air, a volume of Browning. He stood sideways towards her and took the book rather clumsily, because he was holding the bun in the other hand. And in the retrospect his voice lacked the cheerful clearness he could have wished.

That occurred after the examination in comparative anatomy, on the day before the College turned out its students, and was carefully locked up by the officials, for the Christmas holidays. The excitement of cramming for the first trial of strength had for a little while dominated Hill, to the exclusion of his other interests. In the forecasts of the result in which everyone indulged, he was surprised to find that no one regarded him as a possible competitor for the Harvey Commemoration Medal, of which this and the two subsequent examinations disposed. It was about this time that Wedderbyrn, who so far had lived inconspicuously on the uttermost margin of Hill's perceptions, began to take on the appearance of an obstacle. By a mutual agreement, the nocturnal prowlings with Thorpe ceased for the three weeks before the examination, and his landlady pointed out that she really could not supply so much lamp oil at the price. He walked to and fro from the College with little slips of mnemonics in his hand, lists of crayfish appendages, rabbits' skull-bones, and vertebrate nerves, for example, and became a positive nuisance to foot-passengers in the opposite direction.

But, by a natural reaction, Poetry and the girl with the brown eyes ruled the Christmas holiday. The pending results of the examination became such a secondary consideration that Hill marvelled at his father's excitement. Even had he wished it, there was no comparative anatomy to read in Landport, and he was too poor to buy books, but the stock of poets in the library was extensive, and Hill's attack was magnificently sustained. He
saturated

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saturated himself with the fluent numbers of Longfellow and Tennyson, and fortified himself with Shakespeare; found a kindred soul in Pope, and a master in Shelley, and heard and fled the siren voices of Eliza Cook and Mrs. Hemans. But he read no more Browning, because he hoped for the loan of other volumes from Miss Haysman when he returned to London.

He walked from his lodgings to the College with that volume of Browning in his shiny black bag, and his mind teeming with the finest general propositions about poetry. Indeed, he framed first this little speech and then that with which to grace the return. The morning was an exceptionally pleasant one for London; there was a clear, hard frost and undeniable blue in the sky, a thin haze softened every outline, and warm shafts of sunlight struck between the house-blocks and turned the sunny side of the street to amber and gold. In the hall of the College he pulled off his glove and signed his name with fingers so stiff with cold that the characteristic dash under the signature he cultivated became a quivering line. He imagined Miss Haysman about him everywhere. He turned at the staircase, and there, below, he saw a crowd struggling at the foot of the notice-board. This, possibly, was the biology list. He forgot Browning and Miss Haysman for the moment, and joined the scrimmage. And at last, with his cheek flattened against the sleeve of the man on the step above him, he read the list.

CLASS I

H. J. Somers Wedderburn
William Hill

and thereafter followed a second class that is outside our present sympathies. It was characteristic that he did not trouble to look for Thorpe on the Physics list, but backed out of the struggle at
once

once, and in a curious emotional state between pride over common second-class humanity and acute disappointment at Wedderburn's success, went on his way upstairs. At the top, as he was hanging up his coat in the passage, the zoological demonstrator, a young man from Oxford, who secretly regarded him as a blatant "mugger" of the very worst type, offered his heartiest congratulations.

At the laboratory door Hill stopped for a second to get his breath, and then entered. He looked straight up the laboratory and saw all five girl students grouped in their places, and Wedderburn, the once retiring Wedderburn, leaning rather gracefully against the window, playing with the blind tassel and talking, apparently to the five of them. Now Hill could talk bravely enough and even overbearingly to one girl, and he could have made a speech to a roomful of girls, but this business of standing at ease and appreciating, fencing, and returning quick remarks round a group was, he knew, altogether beyond him. Coming up the staircase his feelings for Wedderburn had been generous, a certain admiration perhaps, a willingness to shake his hand conspicuously and heartily as one who had fought but the first round. But before Christmas Wedderburn had never gone up to that end of the room to talk. In a flash Hill's mist of vague excitement condensed abruptly to a vivid dislike of Wedderburn. Possibly his expression changed. As he came up to his place Wedderburn nodded carelessly to him, and the others glanced round. Miss Haysman looked at him and away again, the faintest touch of her eyes. "I can't agree with you, Mr. Wedderburn," she said.

"I must congratulate you on your first class, Mr. Hill," said the spectacled girl in green, turning round and beaming at him.

"It's nothing," said Hill, staring at Wedderburn and Miss Haysman talking together, and eager to hear what they talked about.

"We poor folks in the second class don't think so," said the girl in spectacles.

What was it Wedderburn was saying? Something about William Morris! Hill did not answer the girl in spectacles, and the smile died out of his face. He could not hear and failed to see how he could "cut in." Confound Wedderburn! He sat down, opened his bag, hesitated whether to return the volume of Browning forthwith, in the sight of all, and instead drew out his new notebooks for the short course in elementary botany that was now beginning, and which would terminate in February. As he did so a fat, heavy man, with a white face and pale grey eyes, Bindon, the professor of botany, who came up from Kew for January and February, came in by the lecture theatre door, and passed, rubbing his hands together and smiling, in silent affability down the laboratory.

In the subsequent six weeks Hill experienced some very rapid and curiously complex emotional developments. For the most part he had Wedderburn in focus—a fact that Miss Haysman never suspected. She told Hill (for in the comparative privacy of the museum she talked a good deal to him of socialism and Browning and general propositions), that she had met Wedderburn at the house of some people she knew, and "he's inherited his cleverness; for his father, you know, is the great eye specialist."

"My father is a cobbler," said Hill, quite irrelevantly, and perceived the want of dignity even as he said it. But the gleam of jealousy did not offend her. She conceived herself the fundamental source of it. He suffered bitterly from a sense of Wedderburn's unfairness, and a realisation of his own handicap. Here was this Wedderburn had picked up a prominent man for a father, and instead of his losing so many marks on the score of that advantage,

advantage, it was counted to him for righteousness ! And while Hill had to introduce himself and talk to Miss Haysman clumsily over mangled guinea-pigs in the laboratory, this Wedderburn, in some backstairs way, had access to her social altitudes and could converse in a polished argot that Hill understood perhaps but felt incapable of speaking. Not of course that he wanted to. Then it seemed to Hill that for Wedderburn to come there day after day with cuffs unfrayed, neatly tailored, precisely barbered, quietly perfect, was in itself an ill-bred, sneering sort of proceeding. Moreover, it was a stealthy thing for Wedderburn to behave insignificantly for a space, to mock modesty, to lead Hill to fancy that he himself was beyond dispute the man of the year, and then suddenly to dart in front of him, and incontinently to swell up in this fashion. In addition to these things Wedderburn displayed an increasing disposition to join in any conversational grouping that included Miss Haysman, and would venture and indeed seek occasion to pass opinions derogatory to Socialism and Atheism. He goaded Hill to incivilities by neat, shallow, and exceedingly effective personalities about the socialist leaders, until Hill hated Bernard Shaw's graceful egotisms, William Morris's limited editions and luxurious wall-papers, and Walter Crane's charmingly absurd ideal working men, about as much as he hated Wedderburn. The dissertations in the laboratory that had been his glory in the previous term, became a danger, degenerated into inglorious tussles with Wedderburn, and Hill kept to them only out of an obscure perception that his honour was involved. In the debating society Hill knew quite clearly that, to a thunderous accompaniment of banged desks, he could have pulverised Wedderburn. Only Wedderburn never attended the debating society to be pulverised, because—nauseous affectation ! he "dined late."

You must not imagine that these things presented themselves in quite

quite such a crude form to Hill's perception. Hill was a born generaliser. Wedderburn to him was not so much an individual obstacle as a type, the salient angle of a class. The economic theories that, after infinite ferment, had shaped themselves in Hill's mind, became abruptly concrete at the contact. The world became full of easy-mannered, graceful, gracefully dressed, conversationally dexterous, finally shallow Wedderburns, Bishops Wedderburn, Wedderburn M.P.s, Professors Wedderburn, Wedderburn landlords, all with finger-bowl shibboleths and epigrammatic cities of refuge from a sturdy debater. And every one ill-clothed or ill-dressed, from the cobbler to the cab-runner, was a man and a brother, a fellow-sufferer, to Hill's imagination. So that he became, as it were, a champion of the fallen and oppressed, albeit to outward seeming only a self-assertive, ill-mannered young man, and an unsuccessful champion at that. Again and again a skirmish over the afternoon tea that the girl students had inaugurated, left Hill with flushed cheeks and a tattered temper, and the debating society noticed a new quality of sarcastic bitterness in his speeches.

You will understand now how it came about that, in the interests of humanity, Hill should demolish Wedderburn in the forthcoming examination and outshine him in the eyes of Miss Haysman, and you will perceive, too, how Miss Haysman fell into some common feminine misconceptions. The Hill-Wedderburn quarrel, for in his unostentatious way Wedderburn reciprocated Hill's ill-veiled rivalry, became a tribute to her indefinable charm; she was the Queen of Beauty in a tournament of scalpels and stumpy pencils. To her confidential friend's secret annoyance, it even troubled her conscience, for she was a good girl and painfully aware, from Ruskin and contemporary fiction, how entirely men's activities are determined by women's attitudes. And if Hill never
by

by any chance mentioned the topic of love to her, she only credited him with the finer modesty for that omission.

So the time came on for the second examination, and Hill's increasing pallor confirmed the general rumour that he was working hard. In the aerated bread shop near South Kensington Station you would see him, breaking his bun and sipping his milk, with his eyes intent upon a paper of closely written notes. In his bedroom there were propositions about buds and stems round his looking-glass, a diagram to catch his eye, if soap should chance to spare it, above his washing basin. He missed several meetings of the debating society, but he found the chance encounters with Miss Haysman in the spacious ways of the adjacent art museum, or in the little museum at the top of the College, or in the College corridors, more frequent and very restful. In particular, they used to meet in a little gallery full of wrought-iron chests and gates, near the art library, and there Hill used to talk under the gentle stimulus of her flattering attention, of Browning and his personal ambitions. A characteristic she found remarkable in him was his freedom from avarice. He contemplated quite calmly the prospect of living all his life on an income below a hundred pounds a year. But he was determined to be famous, to make, recognisably in his own proper person, the world a better place to live in. He took Bradlaugh and John Burns for his leaders and models, poor, even impecunious, great men. But Miss Haysman thought that such lives were deficient on the æsthetic side, by which, though she did not know it, she meant good wall paper and upholstery, pretty books, tasteful clothes, concerts, and meals nicely cooked and respectfully served.

At last came the day of the second examination, and the professor of botany, a fussy, conscientious man, rearranged all the tables in a long narrow laboratory to prevent copying, and put his
demonstrator

demonstrator on a chair on a table (where he felt, he said, like a Hindoo god) to see all the cheating, and stuck a notice outside the door, "Door closed," for no earthly reason that any human being could discover. And all the morning from ten till one the quill of Wedderburn shrieked defiance at Hill's, and the quills of the others chased their leaders in a tireless pack, and so also it was in the afternoon. Wedderburn was a little quieter than usual, and Hill's face was hot all day, and his overcoat bulged with text-books and note-books against the last moment's revision. And the next day, in the morning and in the afternoon, was the practical examination when sections had to be cut and slides identified. In the morning Hill was depressed because he knew he had cut a thick section, and in the afternoon came the mysterious slip.

It was just the kind of thing that the botanical professor was always doing. Like the income tax, it offered a premium to the cheat. It was a preparation under the microscope, a little glass slip, held in its place on the stage of the instrument by light steel clips, and the inscription set forth that the slip was not to be moved. Each student was to go in turn to it, sketch it, write in his book of answers what he considered it to be, and return to his place. Now, to move such a slip is a thing one can do by a chance movement of the finger, and in a fraction of a second. The professor's reason for decreeing that the slip should not be moved depended on the fact that the object he wanted identified was characteristic of a certain tree stem. In the position in which it was placed it was a difficult thing to recognise, but once the slip was moved so as to bring other parts of the preparation into view, its nature was obvious enough.

Hill came to this, flushed from a contest with staining re-agents, sat down on the little stool before the microscope, turned the mirror to get the best light, and then, out of sheer habit, shifted the

the slip. At once he remembered the prohibition, and, with an almost continuous motion of his hands, moved it back, and sat paralysed with astonishment at his action.

Then, slowly, he turned his head. The professor was out of the room; the demonstrator sat aloft on his impromptu rostrum, reading the *Q. Jour. Mi. Sci.*; the rest of the examinees were busy, and with their backs to him. Should he own up to the accident now? He knew quite clearly what the thing was. It was a lenticel, a characteristic preparation from the elder-tree. His eyes roved over his intent fellow-students, and Wedderburn suddenly glanced over his shoulder at him with a queer expression in his eyes. The mental excitement that had kept Hill at an abnormal pitch of vigour these two days gave way to a curious nervous tension. His book of answers was beside him. He did not write down what the thing was, but with one eye at the microscope he began making a hasty sketch of it. His mind was full of this grotesque puzzle in ethics that had suddenly been sprung upon him. Should he identify it? or should he leave this question unanswered? In that case Wedderburn would probably come out first in the second result. How could he tell now whether he might not have identified the thing without shifting it? It was possible that Wedderburn had failed to recognise it, of course. Suppose Wedderburn, too, had shifted the slide? He looked up at the clock. There were fifteen minutes in which to make up his mind. He gathered up his book of answers and the coloured pencils he used in illustrating his replies, and walked back to his seat.

He read through his manuscript, and then sat thinking and gnawing his knuckle. It would look queer now if he owned up. He *must* beat Wedderburn. He forgot the examples of those starry gentlemen, John Burns and Bradlaugh. Besides, he reflected,

flected, the glimpse of the rest of the slip he had had was, after all, quite accidental, forced upon him by chance, a kind of providential revelation rather than an unfair advantage. It was not nearly so dishonest to avail himself of that as it was of Broome, who believed in the efficacy of prayer, to pray daily for a first-class. "Five minutes more," said the demonstrator, folding up his paper and becoming observant. Hill watched the clock hands until two minutes remained ; then he opened the book of answers, and, with hot ears and an affectation of ease, gave his drawing of the lenticel its name.

When the second pass list appeared, the previous positions of Wedderburn and Hill were reversed, and the spectacled girl in green, who knew the demonstrator in private life (where he was practically human), said that in the result of the two examinations taken together Hill had the advantage of a mark—167 to 166 out of a possible 200. Every one admired Hill in a way, though the suspicion of "mugging" clung to him. But Hill was to find congratulations and Miss Haysman's enhanced opinion of him; and even the decided decline in the crest of Wedderburn tainted by an unhappy memory. He felt a remarkable access of energy at first, and the note of a democracy marching to triumph returned to his debating society speeches ; he worked at his comparative anatomy with tremendous zeal and effect, and he went on with his æsthetic education. But through it all, a vivid little picture was continually coming before his mind's eye—of a sneakish person manipulating a slide.

No human being had witnessed the act, and he was cocksure that no higher power existed to see it ; but for all that it worried him. Memories are not dead things, but alive ; they dwindle in disuse, but they harden and develop in all sorts of queer ways if they

they are being continually fretted. Curiously enough, though at the time he perceived clearly that the shifting was accidental, as the days wore on his memory became confused about it, until at last he was not sure—although he assured himself that he *was* sure—whether the movement had been absolutely involuntary. Then it is possible that Hill's dietary was conducive to morbid conscientiousness; a breakfast frequently eaten in a hurry, a midday bun, and, at such hours after five as chanced to be convenient, such meat as his means determined, usually in a chop-house in a back street off the Brompton Road. Occasionally he treated himself to threepenny or ninepenny classics, and they usually represented a suppression of potatoes or chops. It is indisputable that outbreaks of self-abasement and emotional revival have a distinct relation to periods of scarcity. But apart from this influence on the feelings, there was in Hill a distinct aversion to falsity that the blasphemous Landport cobbler had inculcated by strap and tongue from his earliest years. Of one fact about professed Atheists I am convinced; they may be—they usually are—fools, void of subtlety, revilers of holy institutions, brutal speakers, and mischievous knaves, but they lie with difficulty. If it were not so, if they had the faintest grasp of the idea of compromise, they would simply be liberal Churchmen. And, moreover, this memory poisoned his regard for Miss Haysman. For she now so evidently preferred him to Wedderburn that he felt sure he cared for her, and began reciprocating her attentions by timid marks of personal regard; at one time he even bought a bunch of violets, carried it about in his pocket, and produced it, with a stumbling explanation, withered and dead, in the gallery of old iron. It poisoned, too, the denunciation of capitalist dishonesty that had been one of his life's pleasures. And lastly, it poisoned his triumph in Wedderburn. Previously he had been Wedderburn's superior in his own eyes,
and

and had raged simply at a want of recognition. Now he began to fret at the darker suspicion of positive inferiority. He fancied he found justifications for his position in Browning, but they vanished on analysis. At last—moved, curiously enough, by exactly the same motive forces that had resulted in his dishonesty—he went to Professor Bindon, and made a clean breast of the whole affair. As Hill was a paid student Professor Bindon did not ask him to sit down, and he stood before the Professor's desk as he made his confession.

"It's a curious story," said Professor Bindon, slowly realising how the thing reflected on himself, and then letting his anger rise: "A most remarkable story. I can't understand your doing it, and I can't understand this avowal. You're a type of student—Cambridge men would never dream—I suppose I ought to have thought—Why *did* you cheat?"

"I didn't—cheat," said Hill.

"But you have just been telling me you did."

"I thought I explained——"

"Either you cheated or you did not cheat."

"I said my motion was involuntary."

"I am not a metaphysician, I am a servant of science—of fact. You were told not to move the slip. You did move the slip. If that is not cheating——"

"If I was a cheat," said Hill, with the note of hysterics in his voice, "should I come here and tell you?"

"Your repentance of course does you credit," said Professor Bindon, "but it does not alter the original facts."

"No, sir," said Hill, giving in in utter self-abasement.

"Even now you cause an enormous amount of trouble. The examination list will have to be revised."

"I suppose so, sir."

"Suppose

"Suppose so! Of course it must be revised. And I don't see how I can conscientiously pass you."

"Not pass me!" said Hill. "Fail me!"

"It's the rule in all examinations. Or where should we be? What else did you expect? You don't want to shirk the consequences of your own acts?"

"I thought, perhaps," said Hill. And then, "Fail me! I thought as I told you, you would simply deduct the marks given for that slip——"

"Impossible!" said Bindon. "Besides, it would still leave you above Wedderburn. Deduct only the marks—Preposterous! The Departmental Regulations distinctly say——"

"But it's my own admission, sir."

"The Regulations say nothing whatever of the manner in which the matter comes to light. They simply provide——"

"It will ruin me. If I fail this examination, they won't renew my scholarship."

"You should have thought of that before."

"But, sir, consider all my circumstances——"

"I cannot consider anything. Professors in this college are machines. The Regulations will not even let us recommend our students for appointments. I am a machine, and you have worked me. I have to do——"

"It's very hard, sir."

"Possibly it is."

"If I am to be failed this examination I might as well go home at once."

"That is as you think proper." Bindon's voice softened a little; he perceived he had been unjust, and, provided he did not contradict himself, he was disposed to amelioration. "As a private person," he said, "I think this confession of yours goes far to mitigate

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mitigate your offence. But you have set the machinery in motion and now it must take its course. I—I am really sorry you gave way."

A wave of emotion prevented Hill from answering. Suddenly very vividly he saw the heavily lined face of the old Landport cobbler, his father. "Good God! What a fool I have been!" he said hotly and abruptly.

"I hope," said Bindon, "that it will be a lesson to you."

But curiously enough they were not thinking of quite the same indiscretion.

There was a pause.

"I would like a day to think, sir, and then I will let you know—about going home, I mean," said Hill, moving towards the door.

The next day Hill's place was vacant. The spectacled girl in green was, as usual, first with the news. Wedderburn and Miss Haysman were talking of a performance of the *Meistersingers* when she came up to them.

"Have you heard?" she said.

"Heard what?"

"There was cheating in the examination."

"Cheating!" said Wedderburn, with his face suddenly hot.

"How?"

"That slide——"

"Moved? Never!"

"It was. That slide that we weren't to move——"

"Nonsense!" said Wedderburn. "Why! How could they find out? Who do they say——?"

"It was Mr. Hill."

"Hill!"

"Mr.

"Mr. Hill !"

"Not—surely not the immaculate Hill ?" said Wedderburn, recovering."

"I don't believe it," said Miss Haysman. "How do you know ?"

"I *didn't*," said the girl in spectacles. "But I know it now for a fact. Mr. Hill went and confessed to Professor Bindon himself."

"By Jove !" said Wedderburn. "Hill of all people. But I am always inclined to distrust these philanthropists-on-principle——"

"Are you quite sure ?" said Miss Haysman, with a catch in her breath.

"Quite. It's dreadful, isn't it ? But you know, what can you expect ? His father is a cobbler."

Then Miss Haysman astonished the girl in spectacles.

"I don't care. I will not believe it," she said, flushing darkly under her warm tinted skin. "I will not believe it until he has told me so himself—face to face. I would scarcely believe it then," and abruptly she turned her back on the girl in spectacles, and walked to her own place.

"It's true, all the same," said the girl in spectacles, peering and smiling at Wedderburn.

But Wedderburn did not answer her. She was indeed one of those people who are destined to make unanswered remarks.

Horses

By J. Crawhall



The Deacon

By Mary Howarth

PROLOGUE

“ Can flowers that breathe one little day
In odorous sweetness life away,
And wavering to the earth decay,

Have any claim to rank with her,
Warmed in whose soul impulses stir,
Then bloom to goodness ; and aver

Her worth through spherul joys shall move
When suns and systems cease above,
And nothing lives but perfect Love ? ”

BEST described in the words used by Thomas Woolner to express his Beautiful Lady, “ A wild-rose blossom of the wood ” is Johanna. For her loveliness was rarely simple ; her mind was rarely pure. Happy the man—so one would think—who should snatch her from the bush, and in his bosom wear her.

Nevertheless Johanna when she married him who to her had been her heart's rest from the day on which she first of all saw him, married one in whose brightest moments but a faint conception of her wonderful beauties was apparent to himself. If

Johanna

Johanna was satisfied however, shall it be for any one else to cavil? And she was. God in His heaven knows and gladdens over the rapture of Johanna. To few only is such power to love given; to those for whom the angels and the great God care most tenderly.

There is on earth no joy to be compared with this of perfect love, save one. And that one, that joy transcending all others, is when such love is met with such love.

Johanna knew not that joy. Hers was on her own side only. And therein is the essence of its wondrous pathos, which is indeed very, very great. But it may be hoped that her mind was blind to the lack. It may be hoped that she never recognised that her husband many and many a time bitterly resented his marriage, or that to it he traced the downfall of his early ambitions.

She, at least, was absolutely and entirely satisfied.

I

The deacon sat in the schoolroom and looked over a sheet of paper he held in his hand. It was covered with notes, and was indeed a synopsis of what he meant to say in church that day, when upon the occasion of his last appearance at Helga, where he had taught the children for three years, the priest would address a public farewell to him and he would have to reply.

“My friends,” he read in a low voice, “my brethren, I am sorry to leave you. But first let me thank you for your kind words and good wishes. I have tried here in Helga to be a faithful servant to my church and country; to teach the children as the State commands, to conduct such services as my priest dictated, and to make myself unto you what I could of comfort and solace.

Now

Now I am going further into the world to teach others, to pray with strangers, to comfort and to solace those whom, so far, I have not seen and do not know."

"Hjorth, Hjorth, the breakfast is ready, and here have I invited Lauritz and Pauline to come in. They were so anxious to see the deacon eat! Little curiosities! have they never seen anyone eat before?"

It was the cheery voice of Karen, the woman who came in in the morning to clean the schoolhouse and prepare the deacon's meal.

Hjorth folded up the sheet of paper over which he had hastily glanced to the end, and, crying out that he would be in the kitchen immediately, set about to clear away the writing materials he had been using.

From the outer room came the chatter of young voices, and the deacon, glancing out of the high window in the schoolroom, saw that a number of his pupils were congregated about the door.

"They have made you some fancy gardens," called Karen, "the children, I mean. You must come and see them before they fade. What is in them, Pauline? Speak up; the deacon will not chide. Hjorth, do you hear?"

"I hear," said the deacon.

"Well then, Pauline, what is in them?"

"There is ling," piped a small, timid voice.

"And sweet gale," shouted a bolder one.

"I got the purple loose-strife down by the river and the grass of Parnassus came from the meadow," cried a child outside the door.

"And you remember the name, which is more," shouted Karen, approvingly, and glancing at Hjorth, who at that moment appeared in the kitchen.

The deacon smiled. His was a serious face, a good deal covered with black hair, which contrasted strongly with his white complexion and pale grey eyes. When he smiled his expression became kind and indulgent. He knew this, and sometimes smiled instead of speaking, a plan that saved him trouble and was effective.

A small, fat, and solemn boy of seven, and a sprightly and coquettish damsel of four, advanced shyly to the breakfast table in response to his invitation. Usually quite at home with their teacher—a due allowance being made for the awe in which they held his office—they displayed a newly-acquired timidity upon this occasion. Not even encouraging remarks from Karen, and an unlimited supply of pancakes added to the usual Norwegian breakfast fare of smoked salmon, cheese, and flad-brod, sufficed to put them quite at their ease. They felt towards the deacon that odd degree of strangeness that forces itself upon one in one's relations towards anybody who has been very familiar and is destined shortly to enter upon another sphere. Thus the sister who is going to be married, the brother who has accepted an appointment abroad, the friend who has won distinction from the outer world, become momentarily some one unknown. The difference disturbs the old sympathy, but, of course, only quite fleetingly, and is recognised merely by those whose temperaments cause them to be hyper-sensitive to such impressions, as children are.

Lauritz and Pauline, moreover, were aware of their own importance upon the occasion, and were the observed of many observers, who clustered about the half-opened door and took turns to peep into the kitchen. This in itself was sufficient to make them self-conscious and shy. Every time the deacon looked in that direction there was a fresh little face, a little pale-haired crown, a couple of pink cheeks, a pair of blue eyes, and a moist open little mouth.

How anxious and inquisitive their expression was at first ! But they smiled when their master smiled on them, and withdrew their heads rapidly after the smile.

When breakfast was over, and he had passed outside with Lauritz and Pauline to admire the mimic gardens the children had made for him in the sandy soil before the school, Hjorth dismissed them and bent his steps towards the sea-shore. He desired to be alone. He wanted to exult once more in the sensations of the occasion, and to picture again to himself the scene that was shortly to take place in the church, in which he would be the man of the hour. Accustomed as he was to live alone, this habit of introspective and anticipatory imagination had grown upon him. Whenever he was strongly moved he craved for solitude and an opportunity to think the whole situation through, just as urgently as other men crave for the companionship and sympathy of a dearly loved friend, into whose ears they can tell, perhaps in a fragmentary way, perhaps fully, as best suits their needs, all that is in their hearts.

The young deacon would not have felt himself so satisfying if he had not been true to himself. Mistaken and foolish he was, perhaps, but at least in his way he was honest.

He almost ran to the shore ; he was so anxious to get to a certain place where he knew he should be absolutely alone. He found it. It was a high promontory jutting out into the open ocean, from which he could see, as he stood looking landwards upon his left, a wild shallow bay of sand, upon his right a jagged outline of sea-fringe, one mass of rocks, and then as far as the horizon pile after pile of strange boulder hills, like an exaggerated lava field, melting away above the sandy bay into a waving plain of wild moorland.

He was absolutely alone ; the one human thing in a 'great inanimate

animate world. He had purposely chosen for such moments this desolate spot, because from it not even a human habitation could be seen.

Conqueror of the universe, full to overflowing of majesty and power, conscious even to sorrow of his own omnipotence, he stood there and gazed around him. The youth, the strength, the ambition, the perseverance, the dauntlessness within him joined with the beautiful exhilaration of the air to produce a feeling of majestic supremacy. There was the world before him; there was he, imperial.

His mind went back a little. He had caught the day before, while he officiated at the funeral of an old man from the fjelds, a transitory impression that had pleased him. It was while he headed the procession and chanted the scriptural sentences that came at the beginning of the service. Between him and the coffin placed on its shabby bier, a farm trolly, and pulled by a mountain pony, had come on foot the old man's near relations, and next after them all the crowd of followers that could be collected from the country-side. The dirge-like chant was familiar enough to him to permit his thoughts to wander while he sang, but because he had had to lead the procession over the pathless meads he had not been able to follow up his ideas so carefully and absorbingly as here on this rocky promontory. The particularly gratifying one that he had caught and stowed away for future enjoyment was a strange mixture of the sensations of the moment. He had left it for absorbing contemplation until a more convenient season. He had thought he was looking inside that rude coffin and gazing upon the seamed, grey face of the aged man, pathetic in its image of care, yet beautiful exceedingly in its meekness and patience. And without knowing at the moment why he thus spoke, he thought he had quoted these words:

"God,

"God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are—or even as this."

He had been pleased. Yes ; he had been pleased. Dwelling over it now it seemed to bear a fantastic, indeed a blasphemous significance. Why had he been pleased ? He must know. Gazing around once more with arms stretched out in yearning love for the prospect and what it meant to him, he recognised that for the life within him, glorious, promising, full of possibilities of God only knew what greatness and joy, he had been rapturously happy that he was not as that corpse : a dead man after a life of much and grinding misery, such as the constant struggle for existence implies for the labourer in a sterile country.

Heaven be praised, he was not as that cold clay, but young and strong and lusty, free as the ocean behind him, strong as the hills before him, and full, full, full to the lips, of vivid pulsing life.

Sorry ? Was he sorry to be leaving this place where there were less than a dozen houses, for the town where they reckoned them by hundreds ? He knew he was not sorry.

Was he sorry for one moment to leave anyone in it ; any single person, beautiful Johanna for example, with her red rose mouth, her pink cheeks melting in a rich cream, her chestnut hair with the love locks curling tendril-wise upon her brow ? Would there be one pang for her ? He passed down from the promontory to the shore, and from the shore to the road, with his mind strangely fixed upon Johanna, meeting and greeting many families in carriages and stolkjærres, and on horse-back, who were on their way to the church.

Not that he had encouraged the thought of her habitually. Indeed it was she who had encouraged him. She had what he called

called taken a fancy to him, and a very embarrassing fancy it had been, displayed in bunches of flowers and bowls of wild fruit, which she had deposited upon his desk, when she brought her little cousins Pauline and Lauritz to school. He had been compelled to be almost rude when she ran after him across the mead one evening, to tell him that the fish were rising in a favourite pool, and to imply a lie when he remarked that that was no business of his. Also he had purposely neglected her flowers, and pushed the bowls of fruit aside.

No ; he should not regret Johanna for a moment. She was a forward child ; just that.

So during the service that came next he paid no more attention to Johanna Tubering than a deacon should to any member of the congregation. Neither did he think less of his own vastly important share in the ceremony. He was conscious all the while that he was the cynosure of every eye there, and when he stood up to answer the priest, who in a few fatherly words had bade him God-speed in his own name and that of the people, the very modesty and repression of his demeanour was the result of a carefully thought out and cultivated attitude of mind and manner.

Johanna's eyes, on the contrary, were frankly turned towards him throughout the ceremony. She sat with her aunt and the other women on the left side of the church ; the men occupying the pews upon the right. She thought of nothing, this child Johanna, but that he was going, and would God bless him ? "Oh, God, Father in Heaven, bless him, I pray Thee. Oh, my God, bless him. Oh, Saviour Christ, I beseech Thee to bless him. Dear God, bless him." Such were her prayers, what time the old priest besought the Lord for all sorts and conditions of men.

And below the oft-repeated supplication came the accompanying
added

added plea : "Oh, God, I do so love him. If it may be that Thou wilt bless him because I love him so dearly, do so I pray Thee. Amen."

She seemed to think that the God she loved would care more for him because she loved him. God was to her a personality ; a kind, loving Father, indulgent to His daughters, because He loved them. Nine times out of ten she did not add the greatest importunement of all : for Christ's sake.

She had it in her mind that she herself went hand in hand with God.

II

It transpired that Hjorth did not immediately settle in the town whither he had been sent. Directly he got there he was despatched to a hamlet up country, where he was to combine the duties of schoolmaster and deacon during the absence of the priest. It happened that the praestegaard or parsonage was being thoroughly overhauled ; something very wrong had been discovered respecting its drainage. The priest was therefore lodged in the inn, where the deacon joined him, for there were many matters upon which the elder man found it necessary to confer with the younger before his departure.

The deacon now discovered what a strangely desolate life he had led in that little sea-coast Helga. He had not recognised while he was there in the middle of the children that he was so alone. He found himself among these people dizzy with their talk. Existence seemed to him a dream and not reality. It was the ending of the tourist season, and there were several English in the house. If it had been the height of the season the poor man would certainly have lost his head. As it was, he went a long way towards doing so.

After

After his first shyness had worn off he began to take note of his companions, and immediately became interested in a certain young lady, who was the governess of some children staying in the hotel. Had he been told that the cause of his interest in her was hers in him, he would not have believed it. Hjorth was a man who was thoroughly imbued with a sense of his own originality.

It all came about after she had asked him to be so kind as to pass the sugar at "aftens," the evening meal corresponding to English high tea. A little discussion ensued as to the Norwegian for sugar, in which the children, her charges, joined. Hjorth, who, of course, like every educated Norseman, could speak English, instructed them in the word, and then they asked for bread, tea, coffee, and eggs, all of which he translated for them.

The governess laughed merrily with the children. The languages were exactly alike, they declared.

Afterwards he met her now and then, taking walks by herself or with the little girls. Amy Travis contrived that they should meet alone not seldom. She on her side was interested in him.

She used to draw him out. She was a creature of impulses and fads, and her fad at the moment was Norway. During the season that she had just passed in London with the family with whom she lived, she had taken every opportunity that presented itself of going to the theatre to see the Ibsen plays. She had read what she had not seen acted, and was really grateful to the Norwegian writer, declaring that he had given her a taste for the reading of drama, and that since she had known Ibsen and not till then, she had been able to read and enjoy Shakespeare. The deacon was to her a very romantic object. Moreover, he seemed to be much in the same position that she occupied—a subordinate one. She felt for him. The mind that is essentially mediocre kicks continually against the subordinate, though it never rises beyond it. Hjorth,
to

to do him justice, did not feel this. But he felt something else keenly. It was being borne in upon him that he ached for sympathy; that so far he had only been half a creature; that he must have the completion of himself. What has been already said about Miss Amy Travis ought to be sufficient to show that he was frightfully over-sanguine, indeed utterly mistaken, in imagining that in her he would find his other soul side. This girl would never in her then condition penetrate further than the eyes and the heart of a man. She was pretty and her manner was attractive. But good as these two attributes undoubtedly are, they go but a short way in the formation of that marriage of true minds that is of all unions the most perfect and enduring on God's earth.

He talked to her about Ibsen, rallying her gently upon her enthusiasm for one whom he, in company with many of his countrymen, called brain-sick. Nevertheless he spent some hours of each night reading him up in Norsk, so that in the daytime he could compare vexed passages with Miss Amy, and, if it might be, explain to her items that had puzzled her, or rather that had puzzled wiser heads in London, Miss Amy having read in the newspapers concerning these disputed lines and appropriated unto herself the bewilderments they expressed. It was significant of the girl's mind that they never discussed Ibsen's theories or ethics. Amy Travis deduced nothing from what she read, and had therefore nothing to say upon such topics. But Hjorth did not detect this. Indeed, he would have been shocked had the girl started the subject of say heredity with him, or of the rights of men to suicide, or of other weighty matters shut out from the consideration of women. Had the girl overstepped by half an inch the limits his inherited convictions set for her, he, the deacon, who was to be a priest, would have been repulsed instantly. Yet he
craved

craved the other soul side of him ; fiercely, eagerly. It is impossible to laugh at Hjorth. One does not laugh at a baby who fondly imagines it has got the moon it cried for, when it is given an indiarubber ball.

The people in the hotel began to take an interest in the pair. Trust Norwegians for curiosity. They are one of the most inquisitive people on the earth's surface, as inquisitive as the Welsh. That is where the old romance of their forefathers comes in. It is what it has worked round to. Now that the ancient days of the Vikings are over, with all that they brought of glorious sensation-tirring deeds, the people have to amuse themselves. So they weave all sorts of romances about other people, feeding their ideas, or setting them in the right direction, by inquisitive questions. It is an innocent form of amusement. They are not spiteful. But not comprehending this national weakness, when to her ears the general gossip came, Amy Travis's mistress—shall we call her?—spoke to the girl laughingly :

"You are making him worship the very ground you tread on," she said. And then she adjured her to remember **Ernest**.

Whereupon the bright-faced girl also laughed and shook her head merrily. But at the same time she **hated** her employer a little more than she had done before, for her unwarrantable interference.

When once Hjorth got an idea into his head, it consumed him. He was so passionately constituted, a man of such wildness of disposition, just the sort to rise to any height. Had he not felt unconquerable out there on the rocks at Helga? It is never given to any one to feel master of the world for nothing. It is a sign of the will that is indomitable, the best attribute, if all others are equal, a man or a woman can possess. Yes, a woman also. Hjorth waited long enough therefore to sound himself only ; not to think
of

of her and whether she manifested any show of feeling that should lead him to suppose she really cared for him. And then he spoke.

They were standing together beneath the flag-staff on a promontory outside the hotel overlooking the lake deep down below them, and on the other side of the valley the glacier mountain, part of the way up which they had all that day walked to see the reindeer cows with their young come down to feed. It was evening. Amy Travis, in her romantic, high-flown way, had been telling Hjorth that a party of republican Norsemen who had been at the inn that day, had said to the manageress that they hoped next time they came, a *pure* flag would be flying instead of the one there was then. What they meant by a pure flag was the Norwegian without the quarterings of Sweden in the corner.

"And I hope so too," the girl added, raising her face, so that the wind blew full upon it. "This land is too beautiful and too free to stand yoked. It should be alone ; independent, sole."

Hjorth stood and admired her. What joy she had in Norway ! How pleasant it was to be so appreciated !

"Yes," he said, meditatively yet modestly, "it is a beautiful land. I am glad you like it."

"And for why ?"

"Because I want you to stay in it," he answered immediately. "Because I ask you to remain in it—to be my wife, Miss Travis. That is why."

It was an open place this, that had shaped itself into his arena for declaration, and, so far, the dusk of the evening was not sufficiently thick to veil their proceedings. Amy Travis took the situation in at a flash. Her presence of mind was wonderful. She laughed a low little laugh, half frightened, half encouraging, stepped
just

just the minutest way from him, turned half round on her heel and spoke :

"What," she said, "become a priest's wife ; out here in Norway—live in the praestegaard, or not that even ; surely you are only a deacon so far ?—in the little house behind the schoolroom ? And in time—*perhaps* in time—to improve into someone like Frue Margetson, with her sad, wrinkled face and eager, anxious eyes. Do you ask me to do this, Herr Hjorth ?"

"I ask you to be my wife," he repeated, ignoring the chance she gave him of tacking away from the serious side of the subject. He spoke sullenly. The prescience of disappointment was upon him. Amy Travis turned half towards him and then back before she spoke.

"Surely you must have known ; surely this must have told you that I am already engaged," she asked, holding forth her left hand and touching a single ring that adorned the third finger of it.

The deacon shuddered. Here indeed was a blow.

"No, no, I did not," he stammered, "the ring told me nothing. We wear it on the right hand here in Norway."

"I am sorry," said the girl ; and then she turned from him in real earnest and left him standing there beside the flag-staff, where he continued to stand until the inn-porter came and hauled the flag down, and the deacon strode off to the house.

This episode annoyed him terribly. His pride was so abased that he assured himself he had been outrageously badly treated.

It seemed to him so monstrous that a man who was going to be a priest should be made the subject of a frivolous girl's flirtation. He was now as enraged with Amy Travis and her attentions as before he had been flattered by them. It was pretty generally the feeling in the hotel also that he had been badly treated. They
looked

looked upon the deacon as a raw young schoolmaster set in a position above his rights. The mistress of Amy Travis was very justly vexed with the girl's conduct, and threatened to tell Ernest the whole circumstances. But her husband, to whom she confided her anger, remembering the lad Ernest, and thinking of him with compassion, counselled her to let Amy bear her own burdens and Ernest his as he met them. This was after it had leaked out in the house that the deacon had proposed to Amy, which of course it did when it became known that that very evening Hjorth had removed all his belongings to a farm-house a mile away, and had apprised the priest of the fact that he could no longer stay at the inn.

A general break-up of the party then occurred. Amy's employers moved on upon their travels, taking her with them; the priest with his sad-eyed wife left for their holiday, and Hjorth was alone. But before he went, the priest, who on his part had thought the deacon extremely foolish, took upon himself the task of informing him as much. He had lived beyond his first feelings of sympathy for the lover and disgust for the girl, and blamed Hjorth pretty plainly for this presumptuous sin of youth, as he termed it. Hjorth was abandoned, sore and miserable. What wonder that his mind turned back to Johanna, the girl at Helga farm, whose deep devotion to himself had been unmistakable? He locked the thought of her and her adulation in his heart, however, struck body and soul into his work, and upon the return of the priest to his parish, departed to the town with praises ringing in his ears. The priest had had a holiday, one out of half a dozen in a lifetime, and Hjorth was flourishing as young men can on thoughts of love and what love means. Strangely enough, this rebuff had failed to teach him its most obvious lesson. And yet why write strangely? A wise Norwegian proverb has it that 'tis the

the eyes that go blind first, and another in another land that a man is never a prophet in his own country. So the most open book is that least read, and the moral that is more plain than any, discovered last of all.

III

And now for Johanna.

The Johanna whom Hjorth had left was not the Johanna of three weeks later. She had been only an imaginative child while the deacon was at Helga, a child whom nature was expanding from a lover of fairy stories and the wonderful supernatural, to a worshipper of the human living hero. When the object of her delightful day-dreams, of her very active and ever-present admiration was withdrawn, she comprehended reality. Reality became to her an unpleasant fact. She understood the meaning of life, and life was sad to the girl.

It was sad to her so far as she could recognise a reason, because she could look no further forward than the dull, uninteresting present. Existence is very monotonous in farm life. Every day brought her the same duties to perform; the care of her small cousins and of the poultry yard, the laying of the table and the clearing up and washing of the things, needlework, more care of the children and of the poultry yard, more needlework, and then bed. To a nature in which environment was scarcely less actual than the spirit of past ages, this was weariness. Johanna came of a stock of adventurers. The blood of the Vikings coursed in her veins, and, strangely enough, though she was a gentle maiden, most delicately and tenderly formed, and though for generations past her forebears had been drifting slowly and very securely into the

the haven of quiet uneventfulness in which the average modern Norwegian passes his life, Johanna's circumstances and Johanna's nature were at war with one another. Concentration was the crux of the girl's being. Interests spread over the domesticity of farm life bred in her a state of hopeless ennui. She was unable to put her desires into words ; and had any far-seeing creature, divining her mind, suggested that she ought to have been a boy so that she could go before the mast, or, like so many of her compatriots, to America, she would have denied the truth of the suggestion, even while an uneasy questioning of its sagacity troubled her.

The departure of the deacon opened her eyes to her surroundings. Her daily duties had, while he was near, been gilded with the beatitude of worship. From a distance she had adored. He had mingled with her conception of God, and, unconsciously Pantheistic, she had instilled divinity into everything. God was in the atmosphere, so that whether there was sunshine or mist, rain or calm, Johanna was satisfied with His likeness ; God was in the sea, so that the life of it or the death it dealt were to her alike acceptable ; God was about her path and around her. She was seraphically content.

But when Hjorth went, this gracious, goodly Pantheism went also. Atmosphere, sea, her daily tasks, all were sordid, uninteresting facts. She saw Helga and her existence there stretch out into the infinite. Though she was seventeen only a cruel comprehension of decay haunted her. She noticed for the first time in her life a darkening, weary look beneath her eyes. It seemed to her that she was growing old. Not all of a sudden old, be it understood, but more dismally than that, gradually old. Other signs she looked for. She could not find them. There were no hollows on her temples ; no doubling of her chin ; no stoop of her neck ; no wrinkles anywhere. Nevertheless she realised that age was. She would

would change from year to year though her life remained the same. Oh, the intense misery of an outlook so completely hopeless! Johanna hated her own indifference to life. Yet life under its new conditions seemed absorbed in indifference. She was a human being stranded; impotent to carve her own future; a vegetable just sentient enough to be conscious of vegetation.

So the summer chilled into winter. Autumn is not accounted a season in Norway. As the days shortened and grew colder, the stove in the farm parlour was lighted, and customs assumed their character in keeping. Card games began in the evenings, and there were dances now and then. The first was in honour of the sheep-shearing. The sheep, which all through the warm weather had been fending for themselves up in the hills, were brought down to the farm, clipped, and let loose within its boundary. Then the farm hands made merry, and with them their master and mistress and the friends of the family. Johanna the year before had been in her quiet way completely happy on this joyful occasion. It was true that the deacon was not present. His dignity he held in too lofty an estimation to permit him to mix thus freely with the people. But Johanna had had the impression of him about her. So she had danced and laughed—all quite quietly, as was her manner—and looked fresh and light-hearted, and had assured her aunt that she had thoroughly enjoyed herself. Perhaps most of that delicious content had been secured by her absence from Helga upon the business of gathering the flocks upon the mountains. It was so completely satisfying to return, knowing that he was there; knowing that, though upon that Saturday night in the barn he would not be present among the merrymakers, the next morning she would see him in church. How those Sundays were blessed! Only illness could deny her his presence thrice that day,

day, excepting during the three months when he took travelling school in the mountains. And Hjorth and Johanna were never ill.

Her uncle invited her to go up with him to fetch the flocks home again this time. She consented. The affair took them three days. One whole day they drove up in the old family carriage into the hills, meeting on the way scores of others on the same errand as themselves. The next was occupied by a sorting of the sheep (which had been driven into pens in the valley by boys) and a village entertainment. The third saw the return journey. Johanna took the whole occasion with more than usual quietude. She had no disappointment to face. The blank lack of interest that life at Helga meant for her would not, she had felt, be dispelled by the three days' jaunt to the hills. She had expected no change. She accepted the listless joylessness of existence, and did not even sigh for sorrow that such life was. But her uncle noticed her indifference, and determined to lose no time in settling the girl. He had already an eligible bridegroom for her in his eye. He reminded himself of Ole Ormond. Some sensible man like Ormond would, as the farmer put it mentally, make all the difference to Johanna. Herr Berg knew nothing of his niece's passion for Hjorth. If he had, his honest heart would have beat heavily with emotion, for Johanna was strangely, pathetically wistful, and Berg was aware that, just as it ran in the family to be concentrative, so did it to be constant. Without any idea but that his niece was sad, and needed brightening, he thought often of her mother, his sister, who, after three months of wedded happiness had lost her husband, and had herself died a heart-broken woman directly after Johanna's birth. Even, however, had Berg been conscious of the reason of his niece's grief, he must have acted as he did. For he would have felt quite sure

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that for the deacon to look at his niece was something as unlikely as that his own little Lauritz should some day aspire to a princess of the reigning house. It was not that the deacon was in reality far removed in the social scale from Johanna. It was that the deacon was Hjorth, a man of pronounced ambition, with an exaggerated estimate of his own peculiar importance.

IV

Never had the tragedy of being, as opposed to the comedy of doing, been so plainly focussed on the lens of Johanna's vision as on the evening upon which she first made the acquaintance of Ole Ormond. She, who had always been open-eyed to the influences of nature, was now dominated by what was happening about her. All was so changed with the outgoing of the Godliness that had before been the essence of all she saw and was impressed by, that she existed in a maze of mysteries. Mysteries alarm. Johanna was intimidated. For the winter mists that constantly rolled down the valley now, that crept up suddenly and quietly from one point or from all, and sucked up to the very walls of the farmhouse, seemed to be enveloping her and her life into what she comprehended it was become. All was narrowing, encircling closer and more close, towards a prevention of any change or stir. The tragedy of being is bitter. Johanna's realisation of it came early, and found her an easy victim. The girl had no wit for self-sacrifice. She was unaware that she might defy the desperation of her case by declaring that, though for her the actualities of existence were over, there should remain opportunities for benefiting others of which she would avail herself. Tragedy with her had the fullest chance. She was devoid of the cunning

cunning to parry—an easy prey to the foil of cruel circumstance. Therefore she met Ole Ormond, aware that he was the husband intended for her, and terrified because Fate had gone against her and was so powerful. It was Fate now, not God, that held her life.

She tightened her lips therefore, and hardened her heart in presence of the inevitable.

As for Johanna's uncle, when he of set purpose invited Ole Ormond to sup with him at the farm and spend the night, he acted, as he would have declared, entirely for his niece's benefit. Ormond was a thriving man. He had been the only child of his parents, and they, too, were without relations. The farm he had inherited had become his, then, without encumbrances. To Johanna's uncle—who had charged upon his estate the keeping of two aged aunts, three sisters, and a mother, all of whom participated, according to Norwegian law, in its profits—this was a circumstance much in Ole's favour and to his personal advantage.

But Berg must have hesitated, for he was a humane and kindly creature, in bringing so inflammatory a nature, so yearning a nature, as Ormond's, in contact with that of a girl so sweetly fascinating as Johanna, had he guessed what Ormond was and known Johanna's feelings. A glance at the man would have told a thinker of such things that Ormond was no ordinary person. Johanna, to whom the aspect of anything was always arrestive, looked at him again and again, with the furtive, watching gaze of a perplexed but interested spectator, at supper upon the first night of their meeting. Ormond's hair was absolutely white—thick, healthy, in generous waves, but white. His face, too, was white, his features clearly cut and strong, his eyes dark and flashing. The pathetic droop of his mouth betrayed him. He was a man of intense feeling. Even while he laughed and made merry with the house mistress, upon whom the fascination of his picturesque presence

presence was not lost, and flung answers to the observations of his host, the impression of pathos clung to him. Johanna decided that she liked him. He was not of a pattern with the rest of her uncle's guests.

He stayed a week at the farm, then went away for a few days, and then returned. Johanna treated him with absolute trust, the affectionate trust of a little child. Ormond, on his part, fell passionately in love with her. But this feeling he did not manifest. There was nothing vulgar, nothing positive about his wooing. He had been in the habit all through life of suppressing his emotions. His intensity had been unwelcome at home to the widowed, shrewish mother with whom he lived. So he had become used to reserve, and, as use is second nature, had grown to like it. Though there was about him, in his every look, his every word, his every action, something that Johanna would have expressed as kindness the most patent, there was nothing to tell the girl she was the personification of all he had in his solitary life dreamed of as heaven, the possible heaven of this earthly sphere.

There are men whom women could swear loved them unselfishly. Their manner betokens the essence of highest, purest, least human love. Women have wept to see such love, have laughed aloud, with the teardrops still dewing their eyes, to find themselves mistaken. There came no opportunity to Johanna to change the impression she had received of Ole Ormond. She never knew that his way of loving her was selfish. Had she been told so she would have been unable to believe it. Had she at last been convinced, she would have been very grieved. Every action of her immediate after-life was founded on this belief, that Ole loved her with such completeness that he would forego all things for her sake, voluntarily arrange all things for her happiness. Love, so she thought, meant selflessness with Ole.

Ormond

Ormond carried his tale to his dearest's uncle first, and the good farmer received with acclamation the protestations of his devotion, and the recital of his means. "They are all right," he declared; "take the rest to Johanna and see if she approves." So Ormond took them.

Johanna consented to become his wife.

Fate was too strong to be defied.

It was then arranged that Ole should go home upon some necessary business, that he should next proceed to the town, where he should buy the wedding-ring, which, during her betrothal, the Norwegian bride wears, a badge as sacred and binding as the matrimonial circlet itself, and that upon his reappearance at the farm the engagement should be made known and the wedding-day fixed. There was no need to postpone the event. Ole's house was ready, and Johanna's uncle was anxious to see the girl settled.

To this point matters had come when Hjorth, in his lonely lodgings, determined to lose no more time in offering himself to Johanna. He was weary of a solitary life, and in Vik he felt miserably a unit.

V

Johanna's uncle accompanied Ole when he left the farm; Johanna, therefore, and her aunt were alone with the children.

It was three mornings after the men had gone that Johanna received a letter. There was nothing extraordinary in that, as a circumstance, for Johanna's schoolfellows often wrote to her. But this letter she saw at a glance was from no schoolfellow. It was from Hjorth. She knew his handwriting. Among her treasures—it was her most precious—she kept a note he had sent to her aunt, a polite refusal to one of her parties, which the irate lady

lady had thrown away in disgust. What could this letter have to say? Johanna's heart beat gladly. At least here was a letter from him. She covered the envelope with ardent kisses, but did not open it until her early morning work was finished, and she was free to rush away into a lonely place where no one would intrude between her and the supreme moment of her life. She had a letter from him. So off she ran, and to the sea of course. The sea called to her, as it had to Hjorth, to come and be solitary, one with the element whose voice is sympathy in sound, whose very impersonality is strangely human, something mightier than man, above the denizens of earth, and beneath the God of heaven. The meadows were hard and dry, though the damp mists of autumn still obscured the sky; the air was very still. Johanna's skirts as she hurried only slightly rose with the movement of her feet; there was no wind to meddle with them. One hand she kept in her pocket holding her precious letter; with the other she pressed the middle wire of the two fences she had to get through, passing from the fields on to the broad sands. Her favourite rock she gained with more than usual celerity, though it was difficult of access. She was as nimble as a goat. Then her heart began to beat, as it had beat when she received the letter, at first slowly with dull thumps that she could feel, almost with pain, then more and more quickly. The letter must ease her she felt. She drew her hand out of her pocket with it in it, read it without ado, and instantly started back for the farm, at a wild run, the slim page clasped in her palm, her hand and it upon her lips.

Her aunt was in the kitchen, but Johanna called to her from the house room and Frue Berg entered, her face reddened by the fire, her eyes sparkling with mingled impatience and wonder at being thus peremptorily summoned.

"Will you take me?" asked Johanna in a small, half-gasping voice,

voice, as she handed the letter to her. This is what the astonished farmer's wife read :

DEAR MISS TUBERING,

I hope you will not be displeased when you read this. I write to ask you if you will be my wife. I am very lonely here, and when I was at Helga I used to think you cared for me. I am going to write to your uncle to ask him if he will allow your aunt to bring you here to Vik. I know he has relations in the town who would take you in, and what I desire is, if my proposition meets with your approval, that we should be married forthwith. Of course I should have liked to come to Helga and fetch you away myself. But this I cannot do. Pray, then, influence your uncle to waive all ceremony, and what you do must be done quickly. If I could be certain of seeing you this week I should feel happier than I do now. I never thought that in so large a town as this I could feel so much alone. Helga was different.

Believe me

Yours faithfully,

CHRISTIAN HJORTH.

Johanna only gave her amazed relative time to read to the end of the letter, before she interrupted the exclamation she saw was coming by this question.

"Will you take me this afternoon?" she pleaded. Her aunt flushed anew, but her eyes softened and grew kind as she walked over to the girl's side, laid her hand on her shoulder, and looking into her face said, gently :

"Then it was Hjorth you loved all the time. I knew it."

Johanna did not make any reply, but she too rose, and while her aunt went to the tall bureau in the corner of the room, pulled out a drawer and from it took her black silk dress, Johanna fetched a small desk, which she placed upon the table, and seated herself to

write

write a letter. It was to Ole, and in it the girl expressed quite simply her reasons for taking the step that was to change both their lives. She loved Hjorth, she said, and she knew that Ole loved her so dearly that he would want her to do what pleased her most. She added that she had known Hjorth one year for every week that Ole had known her. The meaning of this she was certain Ole would understand.

"I am not sure whether I should," demurred Frue Berg, as she eyed the white frilling in her gown, to see that it was clean. Johanna looked back at her. She was just leaving the room for her own.

"The train leaves in half-an-hour," she said, and went away. "If it's to be done, it must be done quickly," muttered the farmer's wife to herself. "I never could think matters over. And it's a match, quite a good and high match for Johanna. She loves the deacon. He'll rise in the world for certain."

As the woman and the girl travelled to Vik, Johanna was speechless, but her aunt was extremely voluble.

"I justify myself for what I am doing," said she, "by recollecting the days of my own courtship. My position was exactly that of yours, Johanna, only that in England we do not think of betrothals so solemnly as you do here in Norway. What I said to your uncle was that though I had been engaged to Tom Wills for a month to please my mother, I should now consider myself. And it ended in our making a runaway match, very much as you are doing, my dear."

Johanna turned her head from the window, whence she had been gazing over the great expanse of moorland, which is a peculiarity of that corner of the southern seaboard, and her serene eyes met those of her aunt, who forthwith continued her rather nervous harangue.

"What

"What I shall tell your uncle will be just this," said she; "Johanna cares for the deacon in the same way that I cared for you. That is why I took her off. He cannot blame me, for, if he should do so, it will show that his love for me is dead, and that," she added, in lower tones, and with a gay toss of her head, "I am sure is not the case."

Still Johanna said nothing. She was never a girl of many words, and this affair had the astonishing strangeness of the unexpected about it; that is to say, it so convinced Johanna of its absolute positiveness, that had she known for years past that Hjorth loved her, she could not have felt more at home with the knowledge than she did then.

When they alighted at Vik station the farmer's wife, whose nervousness was becoming more assertive, proposed that they should go straight away to Hjorth's house.

"Better see him and make all arrangements," she remarked, "before going to your uncle's sister's. Then we shall know how to act. Let me see now. We have the address in the letter." She felt in her pocket for the letter, pulled out her handkerchief, an extra pair of gloves and her keys, then turned the pocket inside out, but there was no letter. "That is annoying," she said, "because I think I have left it on the table for everyone to look at. But we can't help it, and I remember that he lives in the Valbjerg-Gade."

"The number is 52," Johanna said quietly, drawing the letter from her own pocket.

Their few belongings the women had packed in a couple of boxes used by Norwegians, oval wooden things, gaily painted, with tightly fitting tops and convenient handles. These they carried to Hjorth's lodgings, where they arrived ten minutes after leaving the station. The trepidation, which Frue Berg was slow

to acknowledge, once more asserted itself as they climbed the stairs to Hjorth's room; so, catching sight of an oil-stove through the half-opened door of the kitchen as they passed, she declared she must positively go in and see the "machine," so that she might order one for herself like it.

"You go on," she said to Johanna, "and I will follow in a few moments."

So Johanna went on calmly enough, and, when she had knocked at the door of the deacon's room and had got no reply, she walked inside, to find Hjorth lying back in a chair asleep. As she stood looking at him his eyes opened, and seeing her, he sprang to his feet, took her hands in his and kissed them gently.

"So you have come," he said. "That is good."

Nevertheless, five minutes later Johanna walked downstairs again, and tapping her aunt on the shoulder, separated her from the woman of the house, with whom she was in lively conversation concerning the stove, with these words:

"We are to go back by the first train to Helga. He says so. There are only a few minutes in which to catch it. Be quick."

Then Johanna's aunt understood that she had made a great mistake. It did not need any explanation on Johanna's part, though the girl gave it in calm, even tones, to assure her that Hjorth refused to marry one who was already promised to another.

"Why did you tell him?" she asked, rather ruefully.

"Of course I told him," Johanna replied.

"Then more silly you," said her aunt. "That should have come later."

So they caught the train, and went journeying homewards. The afternoon was closing in, and the great Jaederen plain stretched

stretched drearily, a great, sad, mysterious blank on either side of them, and when they reached Helga station it was quite dark, and they had been speechless for more than half an hour.

Hjorth had sent her back ; that was all Johanna's numbed mind could comprehend.

VI

Johanna and her aunt separated at the station. Frue Berg set off at a great pace for the farm, but Johanna turned in just the opposite direction. Frue Berg was tired, anxious, and very cross. Foreshadowings of distress and discomfort as a result of the afternoon's escapade haunted her. She vaguely wondered in what form her niece's and her own action would be punished, and settled in her mind that there should be good excuses coined for their visit to Vik, which Herr Berg would accept without any doubt. Johanna, she determined, should be made to understand that her foolishness in telling Hjorth she was betrothed must not be repeated by making a clean breast of matters to Ormond. "If I'd understood the girl," grumbled the farmer's wife to herself, "she should have gone down on her bended knees before I'd have taken her to Vik."

As she tramped sullenly along the sandy road leading from the station, head downwards, walking in growing wrath mingled largely with resentment, with a thought for the baking she had left behind, and the teasing side conviction that the fact that she had done so unhousewifely an action would materially interfere with the appearance of truth her tale would bear, Frue Berg heard a sudden chorus of shouts.

"It's something to do with Lauritz," she cried out, quite loud ; and with the mother-wit of a woman there flashed into her mind a prescience

a prescience of what was actually partly the case. "He's at the eel-traps," she said as she ran, "he's drowning; my boy's dead."

Glimpses of lights flashing here and there in the dimness down through the leafless trees in the meadows where the river ran, confirmed her suspicions. Unaccustomed though she was to running, she struggled on, thick, incessant utterances forcing themselves from her trembling lips. "To think I should have left them—wicked woman as I am. Won't someone tell me whether my Lauritz is drowned? Is he dead—is he dead, I say?" There was not a creature at hand to reply. Frue Berg had never felt so much alone, nor so helpless, in all her life before.

As she approached nearer her worst fears were confirmed. The lanterns were certainly being carried backwards and forwards, in an agitated medley, beside the river's brink. But before she actually reached the crowd of men, women, and children, her ears were gladdened by tones she recognised, though they were shrill and terrified, as her boy's.

"It was here," she heard Lauritz declare. "Just here."

Frue Berg stumbled forward, made a way for herself through the cluster of folk, and seized the child by the arm.

He was dripping wet.

"What is it all about?" she asked roughly, once more anger predominating now that fear was soothed.

Then Lauritz and a woman servant separated themselves from the rest, and told their tale, but Lauritz broke away from the recital to cry, and as his mother's grip became tighter his wailings grew more intense, for he feared the wrath to come. Frue Berg hurried him to the house, listening to the servant the while.

It transpired that Lauritz, whose ambition it had long been to set some eel traps in a place upon which he had had his eye for
some

some time, had seized the very obvious opportunity of his mother's absence to carry out the scheme. He had therefore stolen out of the farm very quietly, had got into the boat, and had pushed off into the river. His haste and fear that he should be found out had been his own undoing, for, leaning out of the boat at his work, he had fallen into the river and would have drowned only for Ole Ormond's interference. Frue Berg gasped.

"Ole Ormond," she screamed, "how, when did he come? Where is he?"

"He is there," replied the servant, pointing out riverwards. "That is why——"

Lauritz here raised redoubled cries. His mother, who was undressing him, slapped him and pushed him away. Then she rose and took the woman servant by the shoulders.

"You shall tell me all," she said sternly, "all from the very beginning. But first, is he dead — Ole Ormond — is he drowned?"

"That is what they fear," declared the woman. "They cannot find him. But he saved your son's life, Frue Berg, that he did; it is certain." The farmer's wife could have shrieked. Here was life playing her a sorry trick, and all for one little false step. She controlled herself, however, to listen. It was important that every wit she possessed should be about her.

The servant said that Ormond had arrived at the farm an hour after Frue Berg and her niece had left it. The blot on the Fröken's letter to him was barely dry when she handed it to Herr Ormond she declared.

"Then he got the letter," groaned Frue Berg.

"Certainly, yes, he got the letter," the maid answered, with some resentment. "It was for him, and I saw that he had it."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards

"Afterwards he seemed angry."

"Did he say anything?"

"Say, no, that is, I know nothing. I was at work in the kitchen," the woman replied. "He went out into the garden and sat on the seat. He and Lauritz there were talking."

"Never a word," whimpered Lauritz from his bed. He had got himself into that haven of repose and felt that he might speak at last with impunity.

"What do you mean?" his mother asked sharply.

"Just that and no more," answered the boy. "What Anna heard was Ormond talking to himself. I went up to him and he was swearing—cursing aloud—bad, wicked oath words."

"Go to sleep," said the farmer's wife, and left the room with the maid.

"You haven't heard the rest," Anna whispered, with her apron to her eyes. She proceeded to narrate that directly she had missed Lauritz, she had rushed out to the river, and, finding the boat gone, had shouted across the water for him to come back. Almost at that moment there was a shriek from the lad. "He is drowning, he is drowning," she had cried aloud, running towards Herr Ormond. Then Herr Ormond had strode past her with all his speed to the river, and had swam out to Lauritz.

"He came back with him so quickly that I couldn't have believed it possible," concluded she.

"And then?"

"No one knows. He was missed. The farm men had hurried up. But not a creature could discover him. Nils says he must have slipped back into the stream with cramp on him, and been taken off by the current over the rocks. They are searching. God send they may find the good gentleman."

They were searching still when Frue Berg went out again; dragging

dragging the river with huge salmon nets, the handiest means they could devise.

"It's for the body," explained the maid, who kept close by the mistress's side; "they'll never find him alive."

Frue Berg groaned again. A great wish was upon her for her husband. She longed to tell him everything, to hold back nothing, to gloss nothing. She sent a man post-haste to Bruvand, where she believed that he would be, to fetch him.

Four miles out of Helga, the man, who was mounted on one of the creamy yellow farm ponies, met Berg in the stolkjærre coming homewards. With him was Johanna. The man shouted the dire news out to Berg, who whipped up the companion pony he was driving into a fierce gallop. It was dangerous to drive on so dark a night at speed so terrible, along a rough road, with loose stones everywhere, and deep pools at constant intervals unprotected from the causeway, but Berg was a man who got the utmost out of his cattle with safety. Before he started off, he gave the mounted man directions.

"Go instantly to Ormond's house," he said, "and see if he is there. Say nothing of all this to Madam. Simply inquire of the servant and return with your information. Borrow a horse for the return."

There was a long shawl wrap across his shoulders and Johanna's which he gathered tightly about her and himself, and gave into her hands.

"What can it mean, child?" he whispered as he bent over her to adjust the wrap. His voice was very tender.

"Lars will find him safe enough," she declared calmly. "I passed him and had speech with him an hour since, on the road."

"As we go tell me again. The night is still. I shall hear."

So Johanna retold her tale, and the farmer, tormented as he was with

with fear and sorrow, had the acumen to observe that in no way did it differ from her previous story. She was as clear, as self-possessed, as satisfied as she had been before. Her very utterance bore the sound of simplest truth.

She declared that at the station her only wish was to find her uncle and Ormond, and tell them all she had done. Ten miles off was Ormond's house. She had set out with the intention of getting there as fast as possible to ask him for his consent to her marriage with Hjorth. She was certain he would give it when he knew that Hjorth wanted her, and she him. Seven miles away from Helga—three from Bruvand, where Ormond lived—Ormond had passed her. He was running along the road. She had not seen him; she had heard him. He was running towards her, at the back of her, and she knew that it was he from his step. She had turned and called Ormond aloud, and Ormond had answered, "Well." She resumed that she and he had not come together, that the voice from the very first travelled across to her from a path or way beyond the road over water, a short cut probably to his home, upon which he must have struck directly she had recognised him by his footstep on the road. It was a grassy path, she was certain, for whereas his hurrying presence was manifested by the sound of his feet upon the highway, there was nothing to hear during their short conversation, although they both ran, and in the same direction, she on the road, he beyond the lake on the sward. She described how his voice had travelled, at first clear and loud, then more and more distantly, until at last it had altogether become inaudible. She had talked the most; she had told him everything. "He will be happy," she ended with serenity. "He wished me well and blessed me. I always knew it. I could not be mistaken. He cared for me just as God cares."

Upon the arrival of the pair at the farm the same explanation was

was given again, with the same conviction of its truth as far as Johanna was concerned, and the information added that she had tarried at the roadside after her interview, if such it could be called, was over, in order that she might consider whether to proceed to Bruvand to find her uncle, or whether to go home and await him there. While she was waiting she had heard the wheels of the stolkjærre and had run to meet it. Her uncle was in it, and she had repeated the history to him out there beneath the fjelds on the lonely road, telling him also of her so recent meeting with Ole. To her the idea that Ole was drowned was ridiculous. But to her aunt and to the farm folk, it was like a conviction of the worst fears, this meeting with the unseen. His body, it was true, was not found, but neither was there to be discovered one single person who could say they had seen the man after he had handed Lauritz over to the maid. The farmer's wife sobbed out that it was Ormond's ghost that had held communion with Johanna. The farm folk shuddered, and believed their mistress. The girl's uncle dragged the river the night through with proper appliances but no result, and in the morning the message that Lars brought back from Bruvand was that the master had not been seen there, and up to the time of Lars' departure for the farm had not arrived. Then the whole country-side was roused, and search was made.

But Ormond was not found.

VII

Hjorth in Vik town when the news reached him was absolutely furious. Fortune was never to favour him, it seemed, in love. He had persuaded himself that Johanna was really dear to him

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after his disappointment over Amy Travis ; now he knew that it was no more Johanna than it was the girl who waited on him in his rooms. He had been lonely and had wanted a companion. Johanna, the woman who had worshipped him, appealed to him as a desirable one ; that was all. But here was a pother. Here was a matter that concerned him nearly ; though it was in no way one of his making. He had proposed for the second time to a girl who was already engaged, and this one, foolish idiot, had compromised him, had involved him in a tragedy that had ended in the self-inflicted death of her lover.

It was in the spirit of self-defence that Hjorth journeyed down to Heiga, and made his way to the farm. Rumours in Vik so far had suggested no solution of the mystery of Ormond's death (all were convinced that he was dead) that involved any idea of suicide. Hjorth had not the slightest doubt personally but that suicide had presented itself to the wretched man. He was persuaded that the reason of Johanna's journey to Vik had become known to her lover, and that the fact of the boy's accident had put into Ormond's way his chance of release. To save his own name from the stigma of dishonour and treachery that must stick to it, he felt, without any just cause, should his part in the tragedy not be properly understood by all concerned, he hurried to his former home.

Helga hailed him with welcome ; hailed him with welcome and not a whisper of reproach. It was at first a relief, as intense as it was unexpected, to find that he was honoured just as he had always been in the little sea-board village, from which he had gone to the big world. Then he became suspicious, and probed the innermost of the people secretly but certainly. When he was convinced that Ormond's death was taken to have occurred as a result of accident after saving the lad Lauritz's life—men must die, said the people ; it was sad, but it was that way exactly with
hosts

hosts of others ; they drowned a good deal in Norway—he repented him of his haste, and almost deplored the sanctity in which he held his good name.

It had never been in jeopardy. No one, it transpired, had had the smallest idea that Ormond was a suitor for Johanna's hand. The three who had known it—Berg, his wife, and Johanna—had not breathed the news to any person. It was very clear to Hjorth, on the other hand, that he and Johanna were looked upon as a likely couple. People nodded, and smiled, and surmised with cunning meaning that he was ready for a bride. At the farm, where he was entertained with the utmost courtesy and respectful cordiality, he met with no hint of the kind, it is true, for all mention of what was past was withheld ; but the very fact of this restraint proved to him clearly that he was looked upon as the man to save the situation, to remove the tense horror of what had happened, from the minds of Frue Berg and her husband.

He proposed, therefore, for the third time, and was accepted with a delight that pleased his pride at last. There was no doubt about Johanna's love ; it was intense. From beginning to end she had cared for him with a passion that had never cooled, a love that burned unalterably bright.

VIII

Johanna had been a wife some time when her story of the meeting with Ole on the Bruvand road was confirmed by his re-appearance.

She and the deacon were living many miles from Helga then. They heard the news from the good uncle who had so generously believed in Johanna at that dreadful time, and had, by his patient philosophy and calm common-sense, made the best of what seemed

to

to have been a fatally foolish step on his wife's part. Ormond, he said, had come home from America (he wrote as if they had all been well aware that he had gone there), with a charming wife and a beautiful child. He did not mention that he looked quite an old man, and that the white moustache he wore completely changed the expression of his face. But so it was. Ormond had materialised in spite of the few seconds of his last meeting with Johanna, and the self-abnegation of his parting words ; and the moustache, had it been removed, would have revealed a cynical curve of the lips that erstwhile had drooped, before the sorrow that was to come.

Johanna read about the charming wife and beautiful little child with eyes that beamed with joy. The deacon, on the other hand, made no comment—verbal or expressive.

The Ballad Monger

By Kellock Brown



Two Sonnets

By Maurice Baring

I

BECAUSE she listened to the quiring spheres
We thought she did not hear our homely strings ;
Stars diademed her hair in misty rings,
Too late we understood those stars were tears.

Without she was a temple pure as snow,
Within were piteous flames of sacrifice ;
And underneath the dazzling mask of ice
A heart of swiftest fire was dying slow.

She in herself, as lonely lilies fold
Stiff silve petals over secret gold,
Shielded her passion, and remained afar
From pity :—Cast red roses on the pyre !
She that was snow shall rise to Heaven as fire
In the still glory of the morning star.

You

II

You were the Queen of evening, and the skies
Were soft above you, knowing you were fair,
With Sunset's dewy gold about your hair,
And Twilight in the stillness of your eyes.

You did not know your dear divinity,
And, childlike, all unconscious that you walked
In a high, mystic space, you smiled and talked,
And stooped to pluck a rose and give it me.

As at the gate of Heaven an angel-child
Might wonder at an outcast's pleading gaze,
An outcast kneeling at the golden bars,
And say : " Come be my playmate, here the days
Are longer and the ways outside are wild,
And you shall play with suns and silver stars."

The Pied Piper

By J. E. Christie



A Resurrection

By H. B. Marriott Watson

THE book slid gently from Gregory's fingers, and closed with a rustle upon the table. He was not conscious of the movement, for in a moment he was rapt among high and tender memories. The verses sang in the current of his blood, and pulsed to the beating of his arteries. They resounded from distant years with the full rhythm of an immediate echo. These instant reverberations in a heart long silent startled him with their unexpectedness. It was so long since he had provoked that pale wraith and image of his old passion. And now of a sudden his fibres were quick with a soft and melancholy yearning. With that passage in the poem, long since forgotten, the resurrection of this untimely ghost was charged with delicate and private meaning. His eyes fell again upon the closed volume, and he repeated the verses in a soothing whisper to himself.

He could see Dorothea's lips move to the phrases, her hand flutter unawares about her heart, according to a habit which had always affected him. He saw her bend and lean to touch him with her pretty air of assurance; soft fingers rested upon his arm. He sighed, and dropping slowly in his chair smiled very quietly at his own fancies.

He

He was conscious of a certain penitence for the long omission of this memorial respect. The appeal of those lines allured him ; he smarted and stung to reflect upon that oblivion in which so long she had been buried. Dorothea's eyes solicited him with their soft radiance ; they seemed to intercede with him for an interval of silent communion. That ghostly visitant in his mind tremulously pleaded her cause. Was it so much, she seemed to urge, to snatch a little space, a fragmentary hour, from out a life dedicated to another, a meagre alms to that poor soul he once had loved ? It seemed odd to him that the voice he once had heard ring so clearly in those rooms had been so persistently mute. The echoes of those familiar tones had died out with the years. What brought them sounding from the silent corners at so irretrievable a time as this evening ? He had foregone his lealty. He sighed and directed his glance upon the wall of his study where hung a slight water-colour sketch. It formed but a dash of colour, with no discernible proportions of a woman, and still less the faithful lineaments of the model. Yet Dorothea had stood and posed for that dainty sketch, and she it was in a manner that still inhabited the coarse cloth and looked forth upon him from blurred eyes. Gregory slowly unlocked a drawer in his bureau, and withdrew a photograph carefully enwrapped between covers. He held it before him, scrutinising it with attention, and the light of the reading-lamp streamed thickly upon the face.

There was just such a look in those poor eyes as had fulfilled them many a time in life. She watched him with that grave patience that had so sweetly mingled with her pretty playfulness. The head to Gregory wore an aureole, with its flow of bright hair. As he regarded the picture from under the arch of his hand, the facts and tenants of that room lost their importunate reality. At a stroke the winter was gone, and across the budding
English

English meadows he walked with Dorothea in the spring. It was not so very long ago, but the ten years had spanned a tragedy for him. Was it possible, he wondered, that love should pass quite away, should change and commute like the fashions of a generation? His eyes suffused. Ah no, he thought, not such a passionate whole love as theirs. He had not forgotten, only not remembered these six months. Somewhere under the sweet earth Dorothea's gracious heart throbbed to his pulses, her pleading eyes were lit with thoughts of him. The photograph dropped from his fingers, as the book had done, and the curtains swung in a mist before him. His memories provoked a warm and happy past; a sense, as it were, of physical pleasure filled him in the recollection of those fine days, now gathered into forgotten Time. The sadness of his reveries filled him with a positive delight. He sighed again, and his glance fell newly upon the picture. Re-informed by his sensitive imagination the bright flesh sparkled with life, and reproached him with its immeasurable eyes. It seemed that those five years which had sounded in his ears so desolately long, which had worn so wearily, inadequately marked his supreme sorrow. The grass was ancient over Dorothea in those five miserable years. The world might well attribute to him a remarkable fidelity. At nights he had sat and thought upon her, those long and terrible nights when her departure was fresh among his griefs, those sad nights, too, upon which it became something of a solace to recall and remember and to weep. The devotion of his mourning spoke to his great love, and yet now that his old happiness and glory were vivid before him, he knew that not five years, not ten, ~~that~~ a lifetime should be the limit of his irreconciliation. The tears welled in his eyes; a short little sob shook him; his shaded eyes devoured the portrait; and then a knock fell on the door, and a light voice broke upon him.

"May I come in, Frank? Are you busy?"

The

The speaker awaited no invitation, as if sure of her answer, but came forward briskly to the table, and placed a hand affectionately upon Gregory's shoulder. With a hasty motion he slipped the photograph between the covers of the blotting-sheet before him.

"Marion!" he said softly, and touched her fingers gently, looking towards the fire in abstraction.

The sudden contrast offered by this apparition took him aback, and for a full moment he was appalled at his own infidelity. Those ashes of the past burning brightly in his heart, he was newly affronted with the present. But the ache faded slowly, leaving in its place a sensation which he could not determine for pleasure or pain. His thoughts ranged vaguely over the enlarged area of the problem.

"You are thinking, dear?" asked his wife, smoothing his hair with a gentle hand.

There was something particularly caressing in her touch, which fitted with Gregory's mood. He looked up at her and smiled.

"Yes, child," he assented with a sigh.

"Aren't they happy thoughts?" she asked, bending quickly to him with an imperious suggestion of affection.

He indulged the sentiment in his blood. He was used to flow upon his emotions, and now the resumed loyalty to Dorothea in nowise jarred upon a present kindness for the beautiful woman at his side. He patted her hand, and sought her face with a distant smile. As he did so the tenderness of her regard struck him. Her hair, the full form of her face, were as unlike Dorothea's as they might well be, but there returned to him sharply the nameless and indefinite resemblances which had first attracted him to Marion. Was it merely that she inspected him with the same eyes of love, or was it some deeper community of spirit between the dead and the living that recalled this likeness? For the first time he realised quite

quite clearly why he had married her. Turning with an abrupt movement in his chair, he held her with his melancholy gaze. The sudden act ruffled the papers on the desk, and the blotting-pad slipped and fell to the floor. With her usual impulsiveness Marion stooped and gathered the scattered papers, still clinging to his hand. He had not understood the misadventure, and her next words startled him.

"Who is this?" she asked.

Gregory saw that she had the photograph in her hand. He thrust out his disengaged arm, and put his fingers on it.

"It is a—a friend," he murmured faintly. Her clutch resisted his; she surveyed the portrait slowly.

"What friend?" she asked curiously, and glanced at him.

Something she perceived in him made her drop his hand, and scrutinise the photograph again.

"Who is it, Frank?" she said, with a show of agitation.

He cleared his throat. Though to himself the situation presented no anomalies, he felt that this was no occasion for candour.

"Oh, a very old friend, who is dead," he said; and then, breaking the silence that followed, "let me have it Marion, I'll put it away."

"No," she said, starting from him. "I know."

He seemed to catch something tragic in her tone, but he laughed a little, as though undisturbed. "I don't think you do," he said vaguely, "you never met her."

"So this is she," said Marion in a low voice, heedless of his interruption. She contemplated the picture in silence, and then with a bitter cry threw it from her. "If I had known," she moaned, "if I had only realised!"

Gregory stirred uneasily. "Come, Marion," he said soothingly.

She

She shook off his hand, and lifted her face. "Did you love that woman?" she asked suddenly.

Her manner hardened him; it was ungenerous that she should so reproach him.

"You know I was married before," he said coldly.

"Did you love her?" she repeated.

Her demeanour put him in the wrong; it was as if she was inviting him to plead guilty that she might pronounce his sentence. He rose impatiently.

"I think we have discussed this enough," he observed.

"You will not answer me," she broke forth passionately; and then "yes," she assented, "quite enough;" and without a word further walked from the room, closing the door behind her softly.

Gregory was vaguely troubled. A confluence of emotions mingled in his mind. He resented the interruption upon his thoughts. The opposition of the two women did not appear to him incongruous. He had been willing enough to entertain them in company, the one as that revisiting memory, the other as the near associate of his life. He had a sense of irritation with Marion's jealousy which had thus disturbed the current of his great regret. He was not a man accustomed to confront vexatious problems, and wondered petulantly why he might not follow his own feelings without challenge. He walked to the fire and poked it in annoyance, and then, returning to his table, once more took up the photograph. The simplicity of that countenance was underanged; its regard dwelt upon him with changeless affection. He sighed. Dorothea, at least, kept her full heart, placid with the old accustomed passion. It pleased and soothed him to consider that here he might commune with her still, discharged from the gross accidents of life. His attachment to Marion did not conflict with his undying compassion for the forsaken companion of his youth. And now, again, his blood

was

was spinning with thoughts of that one who had been wrapt these five years in the shroud of death. The flow of the old mood resumed in him, and softly replacing the picture in his drawer, he opened the long windows of his room and walked forth silently upon the lawn.

The wind was blowing through the garden, and the rain flew in gusts upon his face. He passed down the walks and entered the dark shrubbery. Here was an interval of silence in the savage night. The little arbour peered through the barren branches, seeming to beg his pity, thus abject to the desolation of the winds. He could see through the dull panes Dorothea's face pass and repass. Her large eyes beckoned him. This spot was consecrated with recollections, and the horrid winter aspect made him shiver. It appeared to consist with the broken pieces of his life. He recognised now how tragic was the dissolution of the beautiful dream. Inside the house he had taken a warmer prospect; but here his heart turned cold insensibly. The shrieking in the branches and the driven rain, the rude turmoil of these barbarous elements, partook of a demonstration against him. Only here, and apart from the public spaces of the garden, lay a little private altar between him and the past. He wondered drearily how he could have married again, wondered with no judgment upon himself, but only with a caressing pity, with tears, with a pathetic sense of isolation.

He had grown into a very tender mood, and once indoors again, went direct to his wife's room. In the dim light he could discern her stretched in abandonment upon the bed, and putting out his hand he touched her.

"Come, dear," he said gently.

He was very full of kindness, and had the desire to hold her to him, and to comfort her. The roaring rain and the wind accompanied

panied his feelings. Marion moved convulsively and gave no answer.

"Come, dear," he repeated affectionately.

She broke out weeping, and he gathered her in his arms, hushing her as he would a child upon his knee. He was sure that his heart was buried with Dorothea, and it was duty to console and soothe this poor girl with fraternal solicitude. Suddenly she sprang from him.

"No, no," she cried between her sobs; "your arms have been about *her*; *her* head has rested on you. Oh, my God, Frank! Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't I realise? You have given me nothing—I have only the remnants. You are divided between me and the dead."

"No, no, no," he urged softly; "you are overwrought; you are foolish, Marion. This is being morbid." He would not deny that re-arisen love. It had broken its grave, and come forth, and its arms were about him.

She clung to him; she whispered passionately in his ear: she pleaded with him to dishonour and annul that old affection so associated with memories. And slowly in the accession of her neighbourhood, and under the warm spell of her arms, the forlorn images which he had entertained in his fancy retreated. Her clasp stirred him; the grace of her slender body, abandoned to this agony of weeping, shook him; her face, superfluous with its tears, invited his hesitant lips. He drew her closer, whispering to her questions.

"Yes, yes, you know I love you, dear," he murmured; "and you are first, darling, you are first."

Before this renunciation that freshly-awakened ghost withdrew reluctant. She was denied her dignity; her attendance was discharged. Beneath the earth, where Dorothea's gracious heart had

had so long beat to his, she must again seek the cold refuge of oblivion.

Marion put her hands about his neck, and the eyes that looked upon her were alight and shining.

II

As the sun struck through his window Gregory set down his pen and looked forth. It was odd, he reflected, that these thoughts pursued him at this particular stage in his life. The remembrance of his first wife had not fallen upon him since his remarriage, until this trivial accident had provoked it. And now she returned persistently. He was quite aware that the verses upon which he was engaged were inspired with the sentiments of that revival. He felt in his secret thoughts that it was impossible to forget. He was still loyal to his dead wife, and it was only in the actual mellay of daily life that the living interfered with her sovereignty. He hung now between the past and the present, with no embarrassment and with no mental confusion, but merely with alternate and comfortable changes of sentiment. Though Marion's nature was infinitely more emotional in reality, his own was wont to be more readily occluded by the drifts and shadows of spectral passions. She, upon her part, was for the time reconciled with her fears. He had confessed that she was first in his heart, and in the glory of that truth she was losing her pain at the knowledge that he had ever thought he cared for some one else.

"It was before he met me," she repeated to assure herself, "and he has never loved any one but me." . . . "Men make mistakes," she told herself, "and he took pity upon her. . . . With that
childish

childish face, of course——;” and of a sudden the image of the woman that had forestalled her stabbed her like a knife. “But in the glow of her returning confidence she put the temptation from her heart. And thus Gregory sat in his room composing his tender lyric to the dead, and his wife following her domestic charges about the house smiled at her foolish distrust.

But in truth these various moods were too delicate to endure, and the passionate nature of the woman was as perilous as the sentimental weakness of the man.

“Sing something, Marion,” said Gregory in the evening.

She started, roused sharply from a temporary doubt that was darkening her thoughts.

“What shall I sing?” she asked unemotionally.

She wondered dismally if such a request had ever been presented before in that room, and the recurrence of that thought quickened her with sudden pain. She glanced at her husband, where he lay sunk within the comfortable arms of his chair, his own gaze vacant and wistful upon the fire.

“What is it you want?” she demanded in a sharper note.

He started. “Let us have—you play Chopin, don’t you, Marion? Play that waltz. You must know it. I think it’s 69.”

Marion’s hands fell rudely upon the keyboard. Like himself she was designed by her own emotions, with little interference of her reason; but what in him proceeded in weak sentimentality issued of her in loud passion. Her blood was resolutely gathering heat, and she was slowly graduating into a frenzy of anger. But Gregory sat by unconscious, floating upon the music along past reaches of his life. He stirred upon the conclusion, and lifted his chin with a sigh. At that, the woman broke forth on him.

“Why do you sigh?” she cried fiercely, turning swiftly upon her seat and confronting him. “What do you mean by treating

me

me like that? How dare you? You coward! You're thinking—you're thinking—I know what you're thinking of. You cannot deny it. I defy you to deny it."

To his early start of surprise succeeded in Gregory's face a cold disapproval.

"I do not understand you," he said in a chilling voice. "You are singularly hysterical. I cannot pretend to follow you."

She laughed harshly, and struck the notes in a discord.

"Don't you? I have less difficulty in following you," she replied, with suppressed scorn. She played a bar or two. "I will not be used to recover your memories of the dead."

A flush sprang in Gregory's cheeks. "What do you mean?" he asked angrily.

"You understand quite well," she replied with passionate deliberation, smoothing her cuffs with studied calm. "It was an excellent thought to make me fill the place of that—that woman. Men must condescend to makeshifts and stopgaps. But now that I know, it is another matter. I have no intention of supporting the memory, or of filling the post of—what was her name, by the way?" she inquired with some exultation.

Gregory shuddered. He had been hurried into such rude and abrupt emotions. As he considered her, Marion appeared to him at this moment vulgar, clamant, almost as a shrieking shrew with hands to her hips. And he had been roused from a meditation of sorrowful sweetness to confront this. He had been moving freely among the tender memories of Dorothea, and the music had assisted his mood. This strident outbreak irritated him, and he frowned.

"You—you drive me beyond endurance," he cried, in a lower voice and with a gesture of despair.

Marion laughed. "Oh, I daresay," she said, being herself indeed

indeed under the stress of feelings that could find no issue in language.

He rose, and the sound distracted her. She clutched him fiercely by the arm.

"It was true?" she asked, fixing him with her scornful eyes.

"What was true?" he asked, shifting his glance uneasily.

"You were thinking of—why, what was her name? I ought to have informed myself of that long ago."

She laughed hysterically. He shook off her hand; the woman was blatant, and deserved no consideration.

"It was true that I was thinking of past episodes in my life which were more pleasant than the present," he said slowly, and with the intention to hurt her.

She rose with a cry from her stool, and, with blazing eyes, confronted him a moment. Then, with a swift change, the whole aspect of her face was struck to despair. She sprang to him.

"Oh, my God! don't say that, Frank, don't say that. Oh, you will break my heart—you are killing me."

She broke into convulsive sobbing; a great, dull pain throbbed in her side. Mechanically he patted her.

"There, there," he said.

"Don't you see you are killing me?" she murmured. "Oh, you don't know. You kill me. Oh, my God! I don't want to hear her name. Say, you lied, you lied. You did not think of her, did you—did you, Frank?"

The desolation of that clinging figure touched him.

"No, no," he said soothingly, "no, no, dear. You—you are mistaken. But you aggravated me. You——"

"Yes, yes, forgive me," she pleaded. "I know it was only the piece itself affected you. We have both been melancholy to-day. Oh, Frank, Frank!"

Her

Her arms encircled him ; he was enclosed, as it were, within the greedy emotion of her love. Her face, moist with tears, entreated him with a quick access of affection. He bent and kissed her.

"I think we must not misunderstand each other, Marion," he said. She lifted her face against his with a little shudder.

"O darling," she sighed, "I am mad, I am mad. Of course I know. But you see, dear, it is this way. Now I know that you care for me, and never cared for her. It's bad enough like that, isn't it, dear Frank ? But we won't think of that. I am your only love. Men make mistakes ; there are many fancies, but only one thing is real. Isn't that it ?"

"Yes, dear, yes," he murmured tenderly.

He was engaged in the proximity of her beauty. He felt that he loved her. No shadow of the dead fell across that reconciliation.

"We will never think of it again," he whispered.

"Never, never," she murmured tenderly. "We will destroy all traces that might bring bitterness. Come," she cried, starting from him impulsively, "let us do so now."

"What do you mean, dear ?" he asked softly.

"The—the photograph," she answered. "Let us burn all our misunderstandings with it."

She caught his hand, and the warmth of her touch stirred him. He followed her from the room into his study.

Marion opened the drawer and withdrew the picture. She held it averted from her.

"Take it, dear, take it," she cried tremulously. She thrust it into Gregory's hand, and, still with his clasp in hers, he contemplated in silence the faded lineaments. A vague sense of pitifulness crept over him. The claims, embodied in that face, arose
resurgent

resurgent in his heart. Dorothea looked forth on him with the familiar eyes ; but this unnatural conflict were best determined, this memory were best re-laid in its habitual grave. He moved towards the grate.

"Throw it in," urged Marion. He stood hesitant, the prey of discordant motives. "Frank ! Frank !" she called pitifully.

With a sudden movement of his fingers the card was jerked into the fire, and lay for a second intact upon the bright coal. He drew a long breath of pain ; a sigh came from Marion also.

"Was she beautiful ?" she asked, her hand covering her eyes.

He paid no heed to her question. Marion lifted her hand and pushed the poker into the coals ; the flames leaped and lapped about the discoloured pasteboard.

"There, dear ; see, we are burning our misunderstanding. You are mine ; you have always been mine," she cried.

The stiff board slid forward and presented itself for a moment to Gregory's gaze. A black streak lay like a cruel tongue across the face.

"Poor girl ! poor girl !" said Marion. She wrung her hands. "She was nobody—what has it to do with you or me ? There burns a young friend of yours, Frank—a friend only."

Suddenly, and with an exclamation of horror, Gregory stooped low and snatched fiercely at the smouldering fragment.

"What are you doing ? Frank ! Frank !" cried his wife in distress.

"Leave me alone," he said sharply, shaking off her hand.

"Do not touch it ! Dare to touch it !" cried Marion, gasping.

He turned with the blackened paper in his hand, and his face was torn with emotion. She appeared to him like a brutal wanton, a devil that had tempted him to a cruel act. Ah, the pain of that sad, desolate heart beneath the grass !

"I will

"I will never forgive you all my life," he broke forth angrily. "You—you are a devil."

"Why—why——" she stammered, her mind tossing in the drift of her emotions.

"I loved her," he said, furiously; "I loved her, do you hear? And you—you who attracted me by a chance resemblance, you——"

His passionate utterance went no further. Her face had fallen, ashen; she moistened her lips, and then with a little meaningless motion of her hand, she stroked her hair.

"Let me go," she murmured, and walked uncertainly to the door.

The long windows of the dining-room stood open, and the moonlight was in flood upon the garden. Marion walked forth without intelligence of her action. Her dress trailed heavily upon the wet grass, and was snatched and plucked by the briars as she passed. Her brain was a heavy lump within her head; her heart, faint and tremulous, was shot at intervals with ominous pains. The calamity had fallen at the very moment of her triumph. She understood now that when she had merely dreaded she had not really suffered. Now that she realised, her frail world broke about her. His words had been a pitiless weapon against her, and she had fled as by instinct to hide the dishonour of her wounds in private, as some poor hunted creature steals away to die.

Marion stood near the gateway and looked out across the meadow. It seemed to her now that she had come into this house upon a false pretence; she had no rights in it. She compared dully her joyous entrance barely six months before, in the full tide of summer, with this ruthless and ignoble expulsion. Circumferenced with her humiliation she contemplated the ruins of her life with staring, tearless eyes. The dark vault of the night, scattered with stars and spread

spread with moonlight, shone blue and clear above her. The earth under the white frost glittered and glowed with a cold radiance. The moon struck the face of the world to silver; the illumination of her sorrow lay around her. Marion's eyes travelled over the great meadow to the verge of the uplands, and to them appeared in that far distance Gregory's slight and elegant figure, with its quiet loitering gait; she saw him raise his head; the pale face with its odd fleck of colour in either cheek, smiled upon her. He opened his arms. . . . The meadow waved with wheat, but the same moonlight visited that opulent field of gold as shone upon this white and arid stretch before her. She could not discern between these rival pictures, the cold purview, this pitiless outcast, and the clanging gates that opened on her Paradise that warm summer evening. She clung to the palings of the fence, her body taut, her vision straining to resume that sweet inveterate fancy. A physical pain dwelt persistently in her side.

The phantasmagoria dissolved into the inhospitable winds of night. She clapped her hands to her face and cried aloud. The agony of that irreclaimable remembrance mocked her. She left the gates and walked wearily through the copse. The bare, disparaged trees crowded upon her like curious, pitiful strangers, receiving her to a community of desolation.

"But they will awake," she cried. "The spring will bring them life."

She sank upon her knees in the vacant summer-house. She realised now that what she had intended was impossible. She could not leave him; she dared not forego the sight of that false face. Poor, passionate heart!

"I am a coward," she thought, weeping. His eyes had encountered other eyes in affection; other lips had touched his lips with thrills of happiness. And she inherited but the shadow
of

of a loyal love ; it was with the rags of that strong passion that she was invested. It was hard that she should be the victim of that great fidelity. . . . Suddenly a great pain stung fiercely at her heart.

His outbreak left Gregory with a slight feeling of remorse, instinctive with a gentle nature. That stricken face made him uneasy, and he turned at once to comfort himself for his cruelty.

"It was diabolical to make me do that," he argued, and in an instant the appeal of that burned and charred fragment diverted his pity to the dead. But most of all it was himself that he commiserated. He had compassion upon himself when he remembered how Dorothea would have winced under this shame. He had denied her, and must carry a heavy load of guilt upon his sacrilegious soul. He offered himself to the enjoyment of sorrow. The grave had not held its tenant ; the disembodied ghost stole silently along the familiar corridors with a new face of reproach. Her features were marked with agony ; he had invoked her from oblivion to disown and disown her. The ruins of that picture made his heart ache. Her radiant flesh was scarred and wheeled with his handiwork ; it was as though he had struck her in her patience and her resignation. She had asked but a private corner of his heart, and he had refused her with contumely. He wept upon that dead despoiled face. The memories of that young love were bright and persistent. They dissuaded him from his constancy to the present. Now he thought upon it, every act and issue of his late life revolted him in his infidelity to Dorothea. Her voice sounded low and musical in the room ; her hands turned the pages of her favourite volume. She sat against the fire and watched him with a sigh, unobtrusive, silent, a voiceless, motionless reproach. Gregory rose and thrust aside the curtains. Across
the

the lawn she seemed to move in her cerements, as she had moved five years ago, but now with a saddened step and downcast eyes. She paused by her rose-bush ; she lingered in reluctance on her way. Opening the window he followed, in the conscious pursuit of his melancholy fancy.

. There, below the hollies, she might now be preceding him, as she had walked a thousand times in life. He entered the copse, and could imagine that she stopped and beckoned to him. His eyes fell upon the arbour. Surely it was thither that she would have him go, to commune there together as they had done so many summer evenings long ago. As he approached the summer-house a flash of wonder turned his heart to stone and then set it beating hard. From the high regions of his soaring fancy he fell suddenly to fact. He sprang forward with a cry of bewilderment ; for Dorothea's face, white and immobile, peered through the dim and grimy panes at him. He pushed aside the ivy, trembling, and stood staring through the entrance. . . . Was it Dorothea's ? . . .

Upon that new grave he might now rear a second temple to the dead, and from her quiet place among the shadows she too might now steal forth to revisit his melancholy dreams.

Wild Roses

By Stuart Park



The Quest of Sorrow

By Mrs. Ernest Levenson

I

IT is rather strange, in a man of my temperament, that I did not discover the void in my life until I was eighteen years old. And then I found out that I had missed a beautiful and wonderful experience.

I had never known grief. Sadness had shunned me, pain had left me untouched ; I could hardly imagine the sensation of being unhappy. And the desire arose in me to have this experience ; without which, it seemed to me, that I was not complete. I wanted to be miserable, despairing : a Pessimist ! I craved to feel that gnawing fox, Anxiety, at my heart ; I wanted my friends (most of whom had been, at some time or other, more or less heartbroken) to press my hand with sympathetic looks, to avoid the subject of my trouble, from delicacy ; or, better still, to have long, hopeless talks with me about it, at midnight. I thirsted for salt tears ; I longed to clasp Sorrow in my arms and press her pale lips to mine.

Now this wish was not so easily fulfilled as might be supposed, for I was born with those natural and accidental advantages that militate most against failure and depression. There was my appearance.

appearance: I have a face that rarely passes unnoticed (I suppose a man may admit, without conceit, that he is not repulsive), and the exclamation, "What a beautiful boy!" is one that I have been accustomed to hear from my earliest childhood to the present time.

I might, indeed, have known the sordid and wearing cares connected with financial matters, for my father was morbidly economical with regard to me. But, when I was only seventeen, my uncle died, leaving me all his property, when I instantly left my father's house (I am bound to say, in justice to him, that he made not the smallest objection) and took the rooms I now occupy, which I was able to arrange in harmony with my temperament. In their resolute effort to be neither uninterestingly commonplace nor conventionally bizarre (I detest—do not you?—the ready-made exotic) but at once simple and elaborate, severe and florid, they are an interesting* result of my complex aspirations, and the astonishing patience of a bewildered decorator. (I think everything in a room should not be entirely correct; and I had some trouble to get a marble mantel-piece of a sufficiently debased design.) Here I was able to lead that life of leisure and contemplation for which I was formed and had those successes—social and artistic—that now began to pall upon me.

The religious doubts, from which I am told the youth of the middle classes often suffers, were, again, denied me. I might have had some mental conflicts, have revelled in the sense of rebellion, have shed bitter tears when my faiths crumbled to ashes. But I can never be insensible to incense; and there must, I feel, be something organically wrong about the man who is not impressed by the organ. I love religious rites and ceremonies, and on the other hand, I was an agnostic at five years old. Also, I don't think it matters. So here there is no chance for me.

To

To be miserable one must desire the unattainable. And of the fair women who, from time to time, have appealed to my heart, my imagination, etc., every one, *without a single exception*, has been kindness itself to me. Many others, indeed, for whom I have no time, or perhaps no inclination, write me those letters that are so difficult to answer. How can one sit down and write, "My dear lady—I am so sorry, but I am really too busy?"

And with, perhaps, two appointments in one day—a light comedy one, say, in the Park, and serious sentiment coming to see one at one's rooms—to say nothing of the thread of a flirtation to be taken up at dinner and having perhaps to make a jealous scene of reproaches to some one of whom one has grown tired, in the evening—you must admit I had a sufficiently occupied life.

I had heard much of the pangs of disappointed ambition, and I now turned my thoughts in that direction. A failure in literature would be excellent. I had no time to write a play bad enough to be refused by every manager in London, or to be hissed off the stage—but I sometimes wrote verses. If I arranged to have a poem rejected I might get a glimpse of the feelings of the unsuccessful. So I wrote a poem. It was beautiful, but that I couldn't help, and I carefully refrained from sending it to any of the more literary reviews or magazines, for there it would have stood no chance of rejection. I therefore sent it to a commonplace, barbarous periodical, that appealed only to the masses; feeling sure it would not be understood, and that I should taste the bitterness of Philistine scorn.

Here is the little poem—if you care to look at it. I called it

FOAM-FLOWERS

Among the blue of Hyacinth's golden bells
 (Sad is the Spring, more sad the new-mown hay),
 Thou art most surely less than least divine,
 Like a white Poppy, or a Sea-shell grey.
 I dream in joy that thou art nearly mine ;
 Love's gift and grace, pale as this golden day,
 Outlasting Hollyhocks, and Heliotrope
 (Sad is the Spring, bitter the new-mown hay).
 The wandering wild west wind, in salt-sweet hope,
 With glad red roses, gems the woodland way.

Envoi

A bird sings, twittering in the dim air's shine,
 Amid the mad Mimosa's scented spray,
 Among the Asphodel, and Eglantine,
 "Sad is the Spring, but sweet the new-mown hay."

I had not heard from the editor, and was anticipating the return of my poem, accompanied by some expressions of ignorant contempt that would harrow my feelings, when it happened that I took up the frivolous periodical. Fancy my surprise when there, on the front page, was my poem—signed, as my things are always signed, "*Lys de la Vallée*." Of course I could not repress the immediate exhilaration produced by seeing oneself in print ; and when I went home I found a letter, thanking me for the *amusing parody on a certain modern school of verse*—and enclosing ten-and-six !

A parody ! And I had written it in all seriousness !

Evidently literary failure was not for me. After all, what I wanted most was an affair of the heart, a disappointment in love,

an unrequited affection. And these, for some reason or other, never seemed to come my way.

One morning I was engaged with Collins, my servant, in putting some slight final touches to my toilette, when my two friends, Freddy Thompson and Claude de Verney, walked into my room.

They were at school with me, and I am fond of them both, for different reasons. Freddy is in the Army; he is two-and-twenty, brusque, slangy, tender-hearted, and devoted to me. De Verney has nothing to do with this story at all, but I may mention that he was noted for his rosy cheeks, his collection of jewels, his reputation for having formerly taken morphia, his epicurism, his passion for private theatricals, and his extraordinary touchiness. One never knew what he would take offence at. He was always being hurt, and writing letters beginning: "Dear Mr. Carington" or "Dear Sir"—(he usually called me Cecil), "I believe it is customary when a gentleman dines at your table," etc.

I never took the slightest notice, and then he would apologise. He was always begging my pardon and always thanking me, though I never did anything at all to deserve either his anger or gratitude.

"Hallo, old chap," Freddy exclaimed, "you look rather down in the mouth. What's the row?"

"I am enamoured of Sorrow," I said, with a sigh.

"Got the hump—eh? Poor old boy. Well, I can't help being cheery, all the same. I've got some ripping news to tell you."

"Collins," I said, "take away this eau-de-cologne. It's corked. Now, Freddy," as the servant left the room, "your news."

"I'm

"I'm engaged to Miss Sinclair. Her governor has given in at last. What price that? . . . I'm tremendously pleased, don't you know, because it's been going on for some time, and I'm awfully mashed, and all that."

Miss Sinclair! I remembered her—a romantic, fluffy blonde, improbably pretty, with dreamy eyes and golden hair, all poetry and idealism.

Such a contrast to Freddy! One associated her with pink chiffon, Chopin's nocturnes, and photographs by Mendelssohn.

"I congratulate you, my dear child," I was just saying, when an idea occurred to me. Why shouldn't I fall in love with Miss Sinclair? What could be more tragic than a hopeless attachment to the woman who was engaged to my dearest friend? It seemed the very thing I had been waiting for.

"I have met her. You must take me to see her, to offer my congratulations," I said.

Freddy accepted with enthusiasm.

A day or two after, we called. Alice Sinclair was looking perfectly charming, and it seemed no difficult task that I had set myself. She was sweet to me as Freddy's great friend—and we spoke of him while Freddy talked to her mother.

"How fortunate some men are!" I said, with a deep sigh.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you're so beautiful," I answered, in a low voice, and in my *earlier manner*—that is to say, as though the exclamation had broken from me involuntarily.

She laughed, blushed, I think, and turned to Freddy. The rest of the visit I sat silent and as though abstracted, gazing at her. Her mother tried, with well-meaning platitudes, to rouse me from what she supposed to be my boyish shyness. . . .

What

II

What happened in the next few weeks is rather difficult to describe. I saw Miss Sinclair again and again, and lost no opportunity of expressing my admiration ; for I have a theory that if you make love to a woman long enough, and ardently enough, you are sure to get rather fond of her at last. I was progressing splendidly ; I often felt almost sad, and very nearly succeeded at times in being a little jealous of Freddy.

On one occasion—it was a warm day at the end of the season, I remember—we had gone to skate at that absurd modern place where the ice is as artificial as the people, and much more polished. Freddy, who was an excellent skater, had undertaken to teach Alice's little sister, and I was guiding her own graceful movements. She had just remarked that I seemed very fond of skating, and I had answered that I was—on thin ice—when she stumbled and fell. . . . She hurt her ankle a little—a very little, she said.

“Oh, Miss Sinclair—‘Alice’—I am sure you are hurt !” I cried, with tears of anxiety in my voice. “You ought to rest—I am sure you ought to go home and rest.”

Freddy came up, there was some discussion, some demur, and finally it was decided that, as the injury was indeed very slight, Freddy should remain and finish his lesson. And I was allowed to take her home.

We were in a little brougham ; delightfully near together. She leaned her pretty head, I thought, a little on one side—*my* side. I was wearing violets in my button-hole. Perhaps she was tired, or faint.

“How are you feeling now, dear Miss Sinclair ?”

“Much better—thanks !”

“I am

"I am afraid you are suffering. . . . I shall never forget what I felt when you fell!—My heart ceased beating!"

"It's very sweet of you. But, it's really nothing."

"How precious these few moments with you are! I should like to drive with you for ever! Through life—to eternity!"

"Really! What a funny boy you are!" she said softly.

"Ah, if you only knew, Miss Sinclair, how—how I envy Freddy."

"Oh, Mr. Carington!"

"Don't call me Mr. Carington. It's so cold—so ceremonious. Call me Cecil. Won't you?"

"Very well, Cecil."

"Do you think it treacherous to Freddy for me to envy him—to tell you so?"

"Yes, I am afraid it is; a little."

"Oh no. I don't think it is.—How are you feeling now, Alice?"

"Much better, thanks very much." . . .

Suddenly, to my own surprise and entirely without pre-meditation, I kissed her—as it were, accidentally. It seemed so shocking, that we both pretended I hadn't, and entirely ignored the fact: continuing to argue as to whether or not it was treacherous to say I envied Freddy. . . . I insisted on treating her as an invalid, and lifted her out of the carriage, while she laughed nervously. It struck me that I was not unhappy yet. But that would come.

The next evening we met at a dance. She was wearing flowers that Freddy had sent her; but among them she had fastened one or two of the violets I had worn in my button-hole. I smiled, amused at the coquetry. No doubt she would laugh at me when she thought she had completely turned my head. She fancied me
a child!

a child ! Perhaps, on her wedding-day, I should be miserable at last.

... "How tragic, how terrible it is to long for the impossible !"

We were sitting out, on the balcony. Freddy was in the ball-room, dancing. He was an excellent dancer.

"*Impossible!*" she said ; and I thought she looked at me rather strangely. "But you don't really, really——"

"Love you?" I exclaimed, lyrically. "But with all my soul ! My life is blighted for ever, but don't think of me. It doesn't matter in the least. It may kill me, of course ; but never mind. Sometimes, I believe, people *do* live on with a broken heart, and——"

"My dance, I think," and a tiresome partner claimed her.

Even that night, I couldn't believe, try as I would, that life held for me no further possibilities of joy. . . .

About half-past one the next day, just as I was getting up, I received a thunderbolt in the form of a letter from Alice. .

Would it be believed that this absurd, romantic, literal, beautiful person wrote to say she had actually broken off her engagement with Freddy ? She could not bear to blight my young life ; she returned my affection ; she was waiting to hear from me.

Much agitated, I hid my face in my hands. What ! was I never to get away from success—never to know the luxury of an unrequited attachment ? Of course, I realised, now, that I had been deceiving myself ; that I had only liked her enough to wish to make her care for me ; that I had striven, unconsciously, to that end. The instant I knew she loved me all my interest was gone. My passion had been entirely imaginary. I cared nothing,
absolutely

absolutely nothing, for her. It was impossible to exceed my indifference. And Freddy! Because I yearned for sorrow, was that a reason that I should plunge others into it? Because I wished to weep, were my friends not to rejoice? How terrible to have wrecked Freddy's life, by taking away from him something that I didn't want myself!

The only course was to tell her the whole truth, and implore her to make it up with poor Freddy. It was extremely complicated. How was I to make her see that I had been *trying* for a broken heart; that I *wanted* my life blighted?

I wrote, endeavouring to explain, and be frank. It was a most touching letter, but the inevitable, uncontrollable desire for the *beau rôle* crept, I fear, into it and I fancy I represented myself, in my firm resolve not to marry her whatever happened—as rather generous and self-denying. It was a heart-breaking letter, and moved me to tears when I read it.

This is how it ended:

... "You have my fervent prayers for your happiness, and it may be that some day you and Freddy, walking in the daisied fields together, under God's beautiful sunlight, may speak not unkindly of the lonely exile.

"Yes, exile. For to-morrow I leave England. To-morrow I go to bury myself in some remote spot—perhaps to Trouville—where I can hide my heart and pray unceasingly for your welfare and that of the dear, dear friend of my youth and manhood.

"Yours and his, devotedly, till death and after,

"CECIL CARINGTON."

It was not a bit like my style. But how difficult it is not to fall

fall into the tone that accords best with the temperament of the person to whom one is writing !

I was rather dreading an interview with poor Freddy. To be misunderstood by him would have been really rather tragic. But even here, good fortune pursued me. Alice's letter breaking off the engagement had been written in such mysterious terms, that it was quite impossible for the simple Freddy to make head or tail of it. So that when he appeared, just after my letter (which had infuriated her)—Alice threw herself into his arms, begging him to forgive her ; pretending—women have these subtleties—that it had been a *boutade* about some trifle.

But I think Freddy had a suspicion that I had been “mashed,” as he would say, on his *fiancée*, and thought vaguely that I had done something rather splendid in going away.

If he had only stopped to think, he would have realised that there was nothing very extraordinary in “leaving England” in the beginning of August ; and he knew I had arranged to spend the summer holidays in France with De Verney. Still, he fancies I acted nobly. Alice doesn't.

And so I resigned myself, seeing, indeed, that Grief was the one thing life meant to deny me. And on the golden sands, with the gay striped bathers of Trouville, I was content to linger with laughter on my lips, seeking for Sorrow no more.

Two Portraits

By E. A. Walton

I. Kenneth Grahame

II. A Child





A Mood

By Olive Custance

THE sun aslant the carpet, and the rain
Blown sobbingly against the window glass,
While I sit silent with a wordless pain,
Pressing my heart between its iron hands.
The slow hours pass. . . .
Between the dawn lands and the sunset lands
My soul walks wearily with aching eyes,
The whole world grey about her where she stands !
Sorrow and she are tired of the long noon,
The sullen skies. . . .
My friend at work hums softly an old tune,
And in the grate, new lit, a fluctuant fire
Puts forth pale pointed flame-flowers that fall soon
Fret all the rough black coals to fairy gold
Of tower and spire !
Sunlight and firelight, but the world feels cold—
The wet trees toss their weight of tumbled green ;
And shreds of torn cloud banners manifold
Drift up the dome of heaven, while slips the light,
Pearl hued, between. . . .

. . . I wonder shall I meet you in the night,
In that dear house of Dreams, Sleep's dwelling-place?
O Prince ! O Lord of life ! O heart's delight !
O Lover ! never this side of the stars

Seen face to face ! . . .

In vain my winged songs beat against the bars
Of bitter life ; then, falling mute and tired,
Like leaves that the sharp hoar frost sheds and scars,
Lie dead beneath the heaven they desired.

A Sketch

By James Guthrie



Poet and Historian

A Dialogue

By Walter Raleigh

Scene—An Academic Grove

Poet (who has been reading the "Midsummer Night's Dream").
Ill met by moonlight, proud Historian !

Historian. I admit that in venturing out in the moonshine I am poaching on your preserves—which you share, by the way, with the lover and the lunatic. But *I* am not of imagination all compact ; I have lungs, and I came out to take the air. My *History of Israel* flags.

Poet. No wonder ; the history of Israel is thoroughly tired of being written. I believe the first man who learned to scratch on wax with a bamboo style began to write a history of Israel. Suppose you were to vary the monotony by writing a Psalm of David. I do not understand what you are driving at. Do you hope to supersede the Bible ?

Hist. Your ignorance appals me. As a collection of authorities and material the Bible cannot be superseded. As a connected and philosophical history its pretensions are slender indeed. The nature and meaning of events, the characters of men and women, are very imperfectly appreciated by contemporaries. I have
rehabilitated

rehabilitated Esau, Jezebel, and Mephibosheth, among others, in the estimation of the world. If I had occasion to go further back, I could show that the first few chapters of *Genesis* are written in a party spirit very favourable to Abel.

Poet. O Buckle, father of History, what a son hast thou! But I hope you *will* go further back. "Universal History," to use the pretentious misnomer, is narrow enough at best, you are "confined and pestered in this pinfold" of some poor six thousand years, and nobody grudges you the exercise you take in it, for the most part upon crutches. The fact is that by the time a people begins to keep a diary, and to jot down its expenses and the events of the day, it has become respectable, the period of its experiments and escapades is over. It has lost its zest in life and in the gifts of life, and has sunk into office-work—a dull and formal precision.

Hist. Were the Greeks dull and formal?

Poet. They were amazingly like us. The chief difference, so far as I can make out, between them and us lies in this, that they did the same things better. I forgot—it is true that if you tickled them they did not laugh, or at any rate they were very difficult to tickle. But no nation, it seems, can have both pomp and humour highly developed. They had pomp. What have we? Still, if I had my choice at this moment, I would be allowed to look at yonder moon for five minutes through the eyes of a cave-man rather than through the eyes of Socrates.

Hist. And doubtless a monkey-house throws for you more light on society and institutions than, say, the Pan-Hellenic festivals?

Poet. It does, and for a simple reason. I have been a Greek, have sulked with Achilles in the tents, and with Ajax have taken my last farewell of the sun. But I have never been a monkey.

Hist. Courage, my friend! A man who despises human institutions

tutions and scorns the history of their development surely need not despair.

Poet. The greatest of human institutions is the human heart.

“*Humani generis mores tibi nosse volenti
Sufficit una domus.*”

What if Juvenal be right? The heart remains triangular and the world spherical—to use the language of the older physiologists. If these two be constant in differing, what does your parade of development amount to? Human affairs run not, says Sir Thomas Browne, upon an helix that continually enlargeth, but upon an even circle. You spend your life in travelling laboriously over a small arc of the circumference; I strike for the centre, where Shakespeare and Æschylus sit throned and immovable. And that, I take it, is the difference between us.

Hist. It is the difference between life and death. You remind me of the delusions of the early seekers for the North Pole. When you reach the centre you may learn too late that Shakespeare was an Elizabethan and that Æschylus fought at Marathon. There is neither vegetation nor life in the realm of frozen vapour that you seek. Long ago I noticed with regret that there are no facts in the books you write.

Poet. Nor are there any fossil plants in my garden. When emotions, thoughts, desires, aspirations, regrets, reflections, lose their vitality and are petrified in the stream of History they become facts. I shall be a fact myself one day, and your grandsons, or, at the furthest, your great-grandsons, will have to learn me. They will get prizes for knowing all about me, including the date and place of my birth, which I do not myself remember. It is not live men you care for; your histories remind me of the Morgue, and all you supply is the squirt of cold water.

Hist. You deceive yourself if you think that you deal only with live things. The very feelings that you pickle in your poems must die first. "Emotion recollected in tranquillity"—if that be poetry, history is action seen from a distance, in fair perspective, by a cool and unmoved observer. And I marvel how any one can hope to see the thing truly save at a distance. The sole use of newspapers, to my mind, is to store them in the British Museum, that they may be used hereafter by historians. The huddle and clash of near events bewilders. It is only by the wand of the historian that they are reduced to order, and so the procession of the ages, moving past in solemn review, becomes the most imposing of human spectacles.

Poet. I agree with you in finding no present interest in newspapers—my feeling for "reviews," by the way, is hardly warmer. But who will ever want them? The age that we inhabit and inform is erecting for itself a paper monument at the rate of a vanload per week of filed journals and newspapers, which are stored and arranged in the British Museum. It was once my fortune to meet one of these cars of Juggernaut, and I could barely resist the temptation to fling myself under the wheels, that so the triumph of History over Literature might be excellently typified. A library is now regarded, not as a treasury of wisdom and beauty, but as a "dumping-ground" for offal, a repository of human frivolity, inanity and folly. Newspapers, forsooth—why not collect and store the other things that wise men throw away, cigar-ends and orange-peelings? Some future historian of the gutter might like to see them. No, I would give to all these offscourings and clippings the same doom—"the unlamented burial of an ass." History would profit, for she has gone after a crowd of strange gods and neglected her best friend.

Hist.

Hist. Do you know how History is written? For the process of discrimination to have value it is essential to let the tangle of wheat and tares grow up together. For the exhibition of the sequence of cause and effect it is essential to destroy no link in the chain which, however base its material, no doubt leads somewhere. Absolute stagnation of mind would reward your well-meant efforts; you would fain gaze at your own reflection in a duck-pond thick with borrowed fancies, because you cannot make a hand-glass of the sea. But Time unrolls itself, and some day we shall understand the script, if we are careful to save the disclosed part.

Poet. Time will wear out and drop off in rags, or be blown away like a morning mist, and Space will be shrivelled up like burnt paper before you understand three words of the script. You try to read the world precisely as Mr. Ignatius Donnelly tries to read Shakespeare. There is the beauty and wonder of the thing plain before your eyes, and you insist on a hidden and portentously trivial meaning. I suppose it is "progress" you are looking for. Progress is economic, mechanical, a matter of bells and buttons and hooks, of methods of election and painless executions; it has nothing to do with the eternal subject-matter of the artist, and you, if you are not an artist, are nothing. I believe, nevertheless, that there are persons who can stand on a mountain-top and talk of progress. In fact, I have met them. They understood diet, which made me think that when a man says "progress," it is the stomach speaks. Your case, of course, is different.

Hist. Pray diagnose my case.

Poet. You are tied to Time and you have to explain it. Time seems to me a kind of monstrous mastodon who ravages the jungle devouring all he sees. Now you have constituted yourself
his

his keeper—a thankless office! “So when people get nervous at the appalling devastations the beast makes, they come to you for re-assurance. “Be easy, dear Sir and dear Madam,” say you, “he is rapidly being trained, and will soon be quite tame. His last meal was seventeen thousand men, twenty-three fewer, you will observe, than the day before. There is no doubt at all that we shall soon be able to get him into harness, and make him fetch and carry to market.” And what you say is grimly true: he took the Roman Empire to market, and it was cheapened and squabbled over by every brown-skinned huckster; he took the Greek mythology to market, and it was torn up and made into frills and cuffs for eighteenth-century poets; he took the Egyptian dynasties to market, and sold them for a little sand. He will take you and your History of Israel to market, I fear, and do you know what you will go for? Literally for an old song. As Gautier says:

“The gods die in their fanes
But shall Poetry pass?
It remains,
And outlives graven brass.”

Now and again, I admit, the beast shows good taste. It was only the other day he took the book of Genesis to market. An enterprising man of Science offered him a rare monkey for it. He took the monkey, and kept the book—a far-seeing transaction. The monkey seems healthy at present, but no doubt it will die. Let us talk of real things—sun, moon, stars, or the plays of Shakespeare, according to the list of realities drawn up by Keats. I am cloyed with perishables.

Hist. By all means. Perhaps you will allow me to say that first among realities I place History, sometimes it seems to me
the

the only reality. "True it is," says my historian of the world, "that among many other benefits for which it hath been honoured, in this one it triumpheth over all human knowledge, that it hath given us life in our understanding, since the world itself had life and beginning even to this day; yea, it hath triumphed over time, which besides it nothing but eternity hath triumphed over." You poets and philosophers are often like alchemists: you seek for the absolute, and believe that you can get a poem, or a philosophy, or some other chemic stuff, to hold the immortality about which you keep such a clutter. But in the end all goes into the crucible of History, and the residue, after refining, is pure historical value. A poet is popular to-day; the popularity is stripped off him to-morrow, and what is left? Nothing but his historical value. A religion perishes, or rather it does not perish, it sheds its followers, and leads a new and more assured existence in the pages of History. What a granite-like calm stability it has then compared with its fume and fret while it believed itself the absolute! Listen to the noisy declamations of a latter-day Protestant against the Romishness of Rome and the Papistry of the Pope, and then read the tremendous history of the Papacy. Which is the greater reality? Believe me, there is nothing but History in the world. A knowledge of History is the panacea for ignorance and prejudice; it checks the utterance of a thousand foolishnesses, and paralyses hundreds of idle tongues. Even our conversation, I venture to think, might have been some sentences shorter if you had studied History. But like it or not, to this favour you must come. It is the history of Poetry that will interest the men of the future. They will have tunes of their own to tinkle in their idle hours.

Poet. See the avarice of knowledge. No single art ever says to another, "Stand aside, I can do your work." I do not stop the brass-beater with an offer to describe the shield he is making.

But

But the men of learning are never satisfied till they annex the world. Still, if you are willing to extend yet further your conception of History, and to give up your besetting sin of politics for a time, I think we may come to terms, for I agree with something of what you say. If all other branches of knowledge, all the arts and all the sciences, all the religions and all the philosophies, are chiefly important as food for history, do not exclude your own pursuit. Write a History of History. Then we shall see how much of your vaunted stability you really can claim. We shall see whether Herodotus, Josephus, Matthew of Paris, and Gibbon were really employed at the same work, or whether it would not be better for History to drop the pretence of being a branch of exact learning, and to speak frankly of a Livy or a Michelet just as the picture dealer speaks of a Correggio or a Greuze. As for the philosophies, I make you a present of them; and the sciences, although no doubt they are useful, have not been long enough admitted within the circle of polite learning to have worn off their insolence and dulness—they are sadly underbred. I quite agree with you that books upon the origin of species ought to be included in a public library, chiefly that the curious of future generations may ascertain, if they are so minded, what the nineteenth century thought upon that question. But what do you say to my proposal? Will you write a History of History?

Hist. I will do so on one condition only. Will you write a history of Metaphor?

Poet. Certainly not. Why?

Hist. The object of your proposal seems to be to compel me to take the sting out of my own pursuit, or, like the scorpion, to turn on myself with it and commit suicide. Am I right?

Poet. More or less. But *suicide* is the wrong word. I should be sorry—no one sorrier—to be the death of a species of writing that

that has given me so much pleasure. Every man must have relaxation ; often when wearied by the austerities of my mistress Poetry I take refuge in the amiable and charming companionship of my gossip History. No, I would not kill her. What I want rather is to put an end to the courtship of History by the more boastful of the Sciences, the hectoring kill-cow Biology, for instance, or the talkative and muddle-headed pedagogue Sociology. Let her come back to her father Herodotus and dutifully accept the mate he gave her—Literature. Love and a palace ; she will find nothing but bickerings and a hut with any of the Sciences. But why should I write a history of Metaphor ?

Hist. I will tell you in a minute. First, let me observe that no sane historian could accept your view. History is, no doubt, a composite of many things, but the views and renderings of individual writers are only superimposed on a basis of hard fact. Fate draws the outlines of the picture, the historian is left to do the colouring, no more.

Poet. "Hard fact !" And how has fact been hardened since the days of Sir Philip Sidney ? Will you allow him to introduce you to yourself ? "The Historian . . . laden with mouse-eaten records, authorising himself for the most part upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay, having much ado to accord differing writers, and to pick truth out of partiality, better acquainted with a thousand years ago than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goeth than how his own wit runneth ; curious for antiquities and inquisitive of novelties, a wonder to young folks, and a tyrant in table-talk, denieth in a great chafe that any man for teaching of virtuous actions is comparable to him."

Hist. We have long ago given up the pretension of teaching virtue ; so that shaft misses its aim. And no doubt it is hard to
establish

establish fact, and hard to preserve it. Nevertheless, the thing is done, and 'tis the dearest interest of knowledge.

Poet. Nay, but examine the process. Take the city hard by. Yesterday there happened in it many millions of events, great and small. To-day there appears a sheet recording a few hundred of these. Who made the selection, and why? Are the most important events recorded? They are generally not even known. You have spoken of newspapers as "material," but, long before you get a newspaper, Art and Selection have been at work. Plainly the events selected have not been chosen for their value to the historian, too often he may wander through wildernesses of newspapers in search of the particular facts that come to have a meaning for him. A certain rough principle of selection I suppose there must be, but it is hard to divine. A shop-window is broken, or a Mayor lunches, and straightway the world knows it. Could anything be more wantonly whimsical? So that my objection to your newspapers, after all, is not that they are history, but that they are art, and very bad art—the worst of things. But if selection and rendering count for so much in the history of a day and a single town, what must they not count for in the history of centuries and a whole people?

Hist. The affair is not so hopeless as you make out. Thrones help, no doubt, and wars, and parliaments. Who is it that says, "Every beggarly corporation affords the State a mayor or two bailiffs yearly, a king or a poet is not born every year?" And I am willing to confess that great men often owe more than a little of their greatness to the laziness of historians, who are glad to simplify their task or recreate themselves with rhetoric. But the predilection for politics, which you deride, furnishes a guiding clue through the facts. Without some such clue history of course would be vain. That is why a great

great many histories must be written—and among them your History of Metaphor.

Poet. Why?

Hist. As an antidote to the bad effects of poetry. You accuse me of pretending to feed people on solid fact, while in reality I give them husks and chaff. But your deceits are more dangerous. You pretend to pour out the sparkling water of truth while in reality you give them the intoxicating heady wine of metaphor. I have seen men on the streets drunk with a single metaphor.

Poet. Then my history would be a dangerous thing, for plainly it would contain many metaphors.

Hist. Yes, but deprived of their power to work evil. Nothing comes under the calm light of history without being purified. You would record the first known occurrence of a metaphor, do all needful honour to its inventor, criticise its later employments, and thus diminish the danger of its being taken by the ignorant for an argument, or, still worse, for a fact. As it is, intoxication abounds.

Poet. That is the fault of the victims. Good wine is a good thing, though it be occasionally misused.

Hist. But its misuse is not so disastrous as the misuse of metaphor. Take the metaphor of an army. How many miserable beings, suffocating in the atmosphere of party quarrels, derive a momentary elation from its misuse. "The Liberals have won the battle all along the line;" or, "The fighting has been severe, but the Conservatives have rallied round the ancient standard and carried the day nobly." Here, it is plain, the essence of the comparison is lacking. If opposing armies had been wont to count heads and announce that the victory lay with the larger, no heroic associations would have gathered around war. More than that, you must suppose that the counting of heads is secret, that any
soldier

soldier may return himself as on either side, and that it is a crime for one of his fellows to reveal his decision. That is one way of settling a dispute, but where is the possibility of heroism? It is not heroic to try to make other men think as you do, every one does that as a measure of self-preservation and self-support. No, the ass is in the lion's skin, the wire-puller has stolen the soldier's coat, and conceals his theft in a metaphor. I do not know if you are acquainted with that other misappropriation of the same figure by a nomad sect of fanatics who make senseless catchwords of the boldest and most beautiful of New Testament metaphors?

Poet. Do not nauseate me; I know.

Hist. They are commonly said to rescue from drunkenness; the drunkenness they induce and encourage seems to me infinitely worse. But the English people have always thought highly of physical health, and are willing cynically to condone mental intoxication for the sake of bodily sobriety. That is what I cannot understand. Robert Burns, now, was not notoriously abstemious, and yet—but I am digressing, you must surely be convinced by this time that the world is waiting for your History of Metaphor.

Poet. I am not at all sure that you would like it when it came. For although I agree with you that a metaphor is neither an argument nor a fact, I do not see how that diminishes its importance in thought. No doubt the mixing of metaphors, like the mixing of wines, is a bad thing; no doubt, when incarnate stupidity gets hold of the metaphors of incarnate genius it will put them to very odd uses. I knew a case myself of one who taught biology on week-days and Calvinism on Sundays. Whether the boastfulness of biology imposed on him, by impressing on him that it was the science of living things, and therefore of life, and therefore of thought, or whether he simply got muddled from inability to cope with

with two subjects, I do not know. But he mixed his Calvinism and his biology, and began talking of shells and crystals and function and structure and protective mimicry on Sundays, to the equal horror of sound theologians and sound biologists. Yet, in spite of these admissions and experiences, you may be surprised when I tell you that I think metaphor, well and fitly employed, the nearest approach to absolute truth of which the human mind is capable. Now do you think I had better write your history?

Hist. You certainly amaze me. I did not think that a poet or an artist could be so easily gulled by the mere tools of his craft. Of course I know that men of science who stray into the realm of poetic imagination are the dupes of many a fine figure and specious similitude. But for a poet, who works the marionettes, to believe that they are alive! It is incredible—much as if a painter should expect the fortune of Pygmalion.

Poet. A man of science who wanders into poetry is usually looking for arguments or facts, and these, as I have admitted, he will not find. Sooner a leg of mutton in a gin-shop, as Shelley remarked. But for the poet himself poetry, and especially metaphor, is the nearest approach to truth. Have you never heard a painter maintain that a good portrait is better than the sitter?

Hist. A passable after-dinner remark. Some one must start the hare; that hare would soon be run down. This much is clear to me, Poetry is truth clothed in the vesture of beauty. You must first find your truth, and then choose the best possible way of dressing it.

Poet. That is the way in which Hume or Buckle would try to write poetry. In something the same way George Eliot actually did write verse. She was a clever woman, and the imitation deceived good judges. But poetry has never been written in that way, and it never will. For to a poet the thought and the figure
in

in which it is clad—nay, the very words in which it is conveyed—are really inseparable. Body and soul, form and substance, thought and expression, sacred and profane, fun and earnest—these and many others are familiar antitheses, indispensable in certain connections, but conventional and scholastic with no deep foundation in reality. Did a painter ever exalt the soul at the expense of the body, or a poet ever say that thought is everything and expression nothing, or a saint ever find the necessary business of life profane, or a great humourist ever assure you that he was only joking? A poet proceeds not by argument, but by vision. He does not clothe a soul with flesh, but informs a body with life. A body that has thus had a soul breathed into it is sometimes called a metaphor. Before that, it was probably a mere fact. Or it may have been a falsehood. It will live on if it find a soul. Witness our old friends the phoenix and upas-tree.

Hist. If you prove anything, which I am far from asserting, you prove that History and Literature can never join hands.

Poet. History can never be written in metaphor. It is so densely populated with facts, moreover, that it would be the height of unreason to suppose that they all have, or ever can have, souls. But whether they have souls or not, they can at least be attired in wedding garments. They are too often a ragged regiment, dissipated and lame, impressing only by their multitude and their idle clamour.

Hist. Truly we are little likely to agree. The improvements I have made in the History of Israel are pointed in precisely the opposite direction. I have been anxious that the bare facts should not be falsified by the impress of style, and that no emotional excitement should blur the impartiality of my readers.

Poet. A philosophical history, I suppose. But would you ever have set about it if there had been no Jewish religion? History
may

may discard figure, religion never can; if it does, it is rapidly becoming philosophy, it will no longer move men. And a very comic figure it cuts during the transition. One shoe off and one shoe on, like my son John of the legend. It is as great an offence in these cases to take off the second shoe as it is not to take off the first. But in the end you must go one way or the other, you must either think or see.

Hist. I prefer to think. You will allow me, I hope, a certain low place in the rank of writers?

Poet. Have you read the pseudo-Dionysius on the Celestial Hierarchy? There are nine orders of angels; with the highest, the Seraphim, knowledge springs from love; with the second order, the Cherubim, love springs from knowledge. If writers were arranged in like manner, I am afraid you would have to be content with being a cherub. But be easy, there are seven orders below you.

Hist. And who is above me?

Poet. Accept my apologies, I am.

Hist. Because you do not speak without a parable?

Poet. Because everything I say has a meaning; I do not catalogue the non-existent. Nothing in the world is of import save as it is interpreted and new-created by passion and thought, and lofty thought and intense feeling will see more in the facts than the facts themselves. So Plato saw in a shadow on the wall an explanation of the appearances of life. So Shakespeare saw in the spring and the autumn the symbols of the beauty and the bounty of his friend. Astrology, they tell me, is dead, but in the song of Deborah the stars in their courses still fight against Sisera. Wherever profound truth is to be expressed you must have recourse to figure. You men of fact assail the truth too bluntly, she is not to be won so; when you can say all that you mean directly, be assured it is perfectly trivial.

Hist.

Hist. You ought to have been a teacher of heraldry to decayed noblemen's sons in a mediæval university. I do not want to startle you when I say that the Renaissance came four hundred years ago and brought in the reign of positive knowledge. Since that time the very artists have given up symbolism except as a game. Listen to a contemporary critic upon Michel Angelo: "Darkness and imperfection are infinite, indeterminate, confused, unknown, and can never be understood; light and perfection are finite, determinate, distinct, easily known and seized upon by the intelligence of man." In your anxiety to avoid the clearness of the perfect you would plunge back into a morass of superstition and mysticism; you care for no picture but a hieroglyph, and value a bunch of spring flowers only as a lexicon whence you may compose your vague messages of sentimental inanity. Queen Anne, they say, is dead. Everything in due time, I have the happiness to inform you that she was born.

Poet. Your choice of queens betrays you. The eighteenth century is gone, and has taken its historians and encyclopædists along with it. It has left a few poets—William Blake for one, who questioned not his corporeal eye any more than he would have questioned a window concerning a sight. He looked through it and not with it. It is this looking through the eye that constitutes metaphor. But it does not draw vagueness in its train. The same Blake remarks that only an idiot has a general knowledge, the knowledge of wise men is of particulars—and so perfectly definite.

Hist. It is late; and I must lose the ten tribes by next week. My publisher will not wait. The moonbeams are playing on your head—which statement I reach by inference, not by vision. Next time we meet let us talk about something we can agree upon.

Poet.

Poet. By all means. The uselessness of useful knowledge, say. Let there not be wrath between us, let us talk about technical education.

Hist. And you will write your history? It is better than twisting the kaleidoscope of the vocabulary to get new patterns of verbiage. Moreover, you might disarm the hostility with which wise men have often regarded your calling. Plato, you know, would have hunted you out of his Republic.

Poet. If Plato were alive, I would banish him out of this commonwealth of England, or rather it would have been done by the mob the day after he published his Republic. The crowd worships great poets (of whom Plato himself is one), not chiefly because they are poets but because they are dead. When there is no Byron-bait or Shelley-hunt on hand, they wile away the time by professing to admire Milton. He died a believer in polygamy, but at least he died. As for your History of Metaphor, you may write it yourself. But beware how you handle your dangerous material; I never knew any one who could not be trapped by the right metaphor. "The Stream of History," or anything else equally cold and slow, will be quite enough to take you off your feet. But never mind, you will reach the sea. And there all of you that is susceptible of promotion will become vapour, and, who knows, you may drop upon Mount Helicon. I am going there on foot. So, for the present, good-bye.

Two Pictures

By John Lavery

I. A Barb

II. Portrait of Miss Mary Burrell





Wait !

By Frances Nicholson

DEEP is the crimson in the west,
And broader, deeper, fuller still
The amber shafts and amethyst
That fret the twilight of the hill.
And wondrously in silver space
The shadowy lake-world glimmers fair,
A magic sunset and the grace
Of fairy woodland, all are here.
About my feet the blue-bells press,
An azure sea of smiling bloom,
And primroses' pale loveliness
Thick clustered in the mossy gloom.
The placid ripples come and go,
No murmur stirs the leaves on high,
The bracken shakes, but who may know
What trembling wild thing flashes by ?
Unsolaced in this green repose
My labouring soul ? and doubt-distressed ?
Oh ! gates of the west roll back, disclose,
Answer with splendour manifest.

Wait !

Answer, and end the long unrest,
The strain to see, and touch, and know,
The sad desire, the fevered quest,
The hopes that die, the tears that flow.
The green leaves listen and are dumb,
The wild-fowl in the rushes sleeps,
The placid ripples go and come,
And the long shadow onward creeps.
A silence, half mysterious,
Half tender, wraps the dusk, and far
In fading crimson, luminous,
Shines cold and chaste the evening star.
Nature is Heaven's Prophet, vast
Her wisdom and her strength, and great
Her teaching could we learn at last,
Obey in silence—work—hope—*wait*.

Two Pictures

By Alexander Roche

I. Idling

II. The Window Seat





An Engagement

By Ella D'Arcy

I

WHEN Owen suddenly made up his mind again to tempt Fortune, and invest the remnants of his capital in the purchase of Carrel's house and practice at Jacques-le-Port, he brought with him to the Island a letter of introduction to Mrs. Le Messurier, of Mon Désir.

But with the business of settling down upon his hands—and another distraction also—nearly six weeks went by before he remembered to call. Then, having inquired his way, he walked up there one mild, blue afternoon.

He found a spruce semi-detached villa, standing back from the road, with a finely sanded path running from the gate, right and left, up to the hall door. From the centre of the large oval flower-bed which the path thus enclosed, rose a tall and flourishing monkey-tree, with the comically ugly appearance to which Owen's eyes had grown familiarised since his coming to the Island. In front of nearly every villa is planted an *auraucania* tree.

The house was of two storeys, painted white, and had green wooden shutters turned back against the walls. Dazzlingly clean and very stiff lace curtains hung before the windows. Owen was
favourably

favourably impressed, and, actuated by an unusual sentiment of diffidence, wondered who were the persons he should find within, and what sort of reception awaited him.

The outer door of the house stood open, and the plate-glass panel of an inner door permitted him to see along a cool dark hall, tiled in black and white, into a sunny garden beyond. And while he waited there, looking into the garden, a girl and boy passed across his range of vision from one side to the other.

The girl was tall and slight, swung a gardening basket in one hand, and had the other arm laid round the shoulders of the boy, who was a whole head shorter than she. Although dowdily dressed in a frock of some dark material, although wearing a hideous brown mushroom hat, although she and her companion had scarcely come into sight before they had passed out of it again, nevertheless, Owen received in that fleeting moment the impression that she was pretty. And it left him absolutely indifferent.

Then a maid appeared from behind the staircase, received his card and letter, and showed him into a small sitting-room on the left of the hall, a room so full of furniture, and at the same time so dark, that for a moment or two he was unable to find a seat. The light was not only sufficiently obscured by the lace curtains he had noticed from the outside, but there were voluminous stuff curtains as well, and a green venetian blind had been let more than half-way down. Probably, earlier in the day the February sunshine had fallen upon the window, and consideration for their best parlour furniture is almost a religious cult among certain classes in the Island; stray sunbeams are fought against with the same assiduity as stray moths. In all the neat villas which border the roads leading out from Jacques-le-Port, the best parlour is invariably a room of gloom, never used but on ceremonious

monious occasions, or for the incarceration of such chance and uninvited guests as was Owen to-day.

As his eyes accustomed themselves to the darkness he began to distinguish a multiplicity of Berlin wool cushions, and bead-worked foot-stools, of rosewood étagères loaded with knick-knacks, of rosewood tables covered with photograph albums and gilt-bound books. He took up one or two of these and read the titles: "Law's Serious Call," "The Day and the Hour, or Notes on Prophecy," "Lectures on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit." They said nothing to him, and he put them down again unopened. He began to study on the opposite wall a large coloured photograph of the Riviera; the improbably blue sea, the incurving coast-line, the verdure-clothed shore, dotted with innumerable white villas. But it interested him little more than the books had done; his acquaintance with foreign parts extending no farther than Paris.

Then the door opened and two persons entered—a very old lady and the young girl he had caught a glimpse of in the garden. Seen now, without her hat, she was decidedly pretty, but Owen merely glanced past her to devote all his attention to Mrs. Le Messurier.

Giving him her hand, she had said "How do you do?" waiting until he had satisfied her as to the state of his health. Then she invited him to be seated again, and introduced the young girl as "Agnes Allez, my granddaughter," only she pronounced the name "Orlay," which is the custom of the Island.

Miss Allez had said "How do you do?" too, with a little air of prim gentility, which was the exact youthful counterpart of her grandmother's. After which she sat silent, with her hands lightly folded in her lap, and listened to the conversation.

The old lady began with a few inquiries after the mutual acquaintance

acquaintance in England who had sent him to call upon her, and Owen replied suitably, while taking stock of her personality. She was dressed entirely in black, a black silk apron over a black stuff gown, a black knitted shawl, a monumental cap of black lace and flowers and trembling bugles. The dress was fastened at the throat by a large gold brooch, framing a medallion of hair ingeniously tortured into the representation of a tombstone and a weeping willow-tree. An old-fashioned watch-chain of pale gold hung in two long festoons below her waist, and on her poor hand—a hand with time-stained, corrugated nails, with swollen, purple veins, with enlarged finger joints—a worn wedding-ring turned loosely.

Owen noted the signs of her age, of her infirmity, with half-conscious satisfaction; they promised him a patient before very long. And in the pleasant evidences of means all about him, he foresaw how satisfactorily he might adjust his sliding scale of charges.

She was speaking to him of his prospects in the Island, saying, with a melancholy motion of the head: "Ah, there, but for sure, you will have some trouble to work up Carrel's practice again. He have let it go all to pieces. An' such a good practice as it was in old Doctor Bragé's time. But you know the reason?"

He knew the reason well. His predecessor had been steadily drinking himself to death for the last ten years, and his practice was as dilapidated as were his house, his dog-cart, his reputation. It was just on account of their dilapidations that Owen had bought the former articles cheap; and Carrel's reputation was of as little account to him as it was to Carrel himself, though it seemed likely, in spite of everything, to last longer than its owner would have any use for it.

"Well, I must try to work up Bragé's business again," said
Owen

Owen self-confidently. With nervous, tobacco-stained fingers he twisted and pointed one end of his black moustache, and became aware that the young girl was watching him covertly.

"There don't seem to be too many of us doctors here," he went on, "and from all accounts Lelever is very much behind the times. There ought to be a good opening, I should think, for a little new life, eh? A little new blood?"

His voice touched an anxious note. The necessity of beginning to earn something pressed upon him. But Mrs. Le Messurier's reply was not reassuring.

"Ah, my good! Doctor Lelever is, maybe, old-fashioned—I don't know nothing about that—but he is very much thought of. He is very safe, and he has attended us all. My poor boy John, who died of the consumption in '67; and my daughter Agnes's mother, whom we lost when Freddy was born; and my dear husband"—her knotted fingers went up to fondle mechanically the glazed tomb and willow-tree—"and poor Thomas Allez, my son-in-law, who went in '87."

Her dates came with all the readiness of constant reference. She entered into details of the various complaints, the various remedies, the reasons they had failed.

Owen's face wore that smooth mask of sympathetic attention with which the profession equips every medical man, but he was embittered by the praises of Le Lièvre, and drawing the two ends of his moustache into his mouth he chewed them vexedly.

His discontented glance fell upon the young girl. A sudden pink overflowed her cheeks. He pointed his moustache again, smiled a little, and let his dark eyes fix hers with an amused complacency. He saw he had made an impression. She blushed a warmer rose, and looked away.

He wondered whether she talked the same broken English her grandmother

grandmother did. He hoped not ; but the four words she had as yet uttered left him in doubt.

Mrs. Le Messurier could not pronounce the "th." She had said just now, speaking of Le Lièvre, "I don't know noddin' 'bout • dat, but he is very much tought of." And she laid stress on the unimportant words ; she accented the wrong syllables. Owen felt it would be a pity if so kissable a mouth as Agnes Allez's were to maltreat the words it let slip in the same fashion.

He undertook to make her speak. The old lady had reached the catalogue of "Freddy's" infantile disorders, and as she coupled his name with no prefatory adjective of affection or commiseration Owen concluded that he, at least, was still among the living, was probably the boy he had seen.

He turned to the young girl: "Then that was your brother you were with just now in the garden, I suppose?" •

She told him "Yes," and in reply to a further question, "Yes, he is only fifteen, and I shall be eighteen in May."

She spoke always with that little primness he had noticed in her reception of him, but her pronunciation was correct, was charming.

It occurred to him that the sunny February garden, and the companionship of the girl, would be an agreeable exchange for the starched and darkened atmosphere of the parlour and Mrs. Le Messurier's lugubrious reminiscences. He drew the conversation once, and once again, gardenwards, but without success.

To be guilty of anything so informal as to invite a stranger to step into the garden on his first visit was not to be thought of. The unconventional, the unexpected, are errors which the Islanders carefully eschew. Mrs. Le Messurier merely said: "Yes, you must come up and drink tea with us one day next week, will you not?"

not? and the children will be very pleased to show you the garden then. What day shall it be?"

The evening meal was at that moment ready laid out in the next room, and Owen, who had a long walk before him, would have been only too glad of an invitation to share it, but it is not customary in the Islands to ask even a friend to take a cup of tea, unless the day and the hour have been settled at least a week in advance.

When Owen got back to his house in Contrée Mansel, he found Carrel sitting over the fire in the dining-room, in a more than usually shaky condition. He was always cold, and pleaded for the boon of a fire upon the warmest days. He paid Owen a pound a week for the privilege of boarding in the house where he had once been master, and spent the remainder of a small annuity on spirits. Owen made no effort to check him, not considering it worth his while. He foresaw that before long his room would be preferable to his company. However, for the present, he had his uses, he knew the Islands well, and when Owen chose to ask information from him, he could always give it.

He mentioned therefore where he had been, and inquired carelessly whether the old woman was worth money. Carrel, though very fuddled, was still instructive. Oh yes, she had money sure enough; was a regular old Island woman, with her head screwed on the right way about. But Carrel doubted whether Owen would ever see the colour of it. "Lelever's got the key of the situation there, my boy, and if he don't go off the hooks before she does, he'll hold it till her death. Unless, indeed, you can get round the soft side of the granddaughter, little Agnes, hey? Little Agnes Allez. Good Lord, what a smashing fine girl her mother was five-and-twenty years ago, before she married that fool Tom Allez. He was her cousin, too, and they
were

were both the children of first cousins. No wonder the boy's a natural. Did ye see him, also?"

Owen meditated; then, referring to the grandmother, asked what she was worth. Carrel thought she would cut up for ten thousand pounds.

"Which, laid out in good sound *rentes*, would bring in £500 a year, and you would have the house, and a nice little wife into the bargain. And a family doctor is bound to marry, my boy, hey? Which reminds me to tell you," concluded Carrel, with a spirituous laugh, "that your scarlet devil of a Margot was here while you were out, inquiring after you. I wonder what she'll do when she hears you are making eyes at the little Allez girl, hey?"

"She may do as she damn pleases," said Owen, equably; "do you imagine I'm in any way bound to a trull like that?"

But all the same he was sorry to hear that the red-haired witch had been round and he had missed her. He had not seen her now for over a week.

An Island tea is a square, sit-down meal eaten in the living-room with much solemnity. It is taken at half-past five, and is the last meal of the day; you are offered nothing after it but a glass of home-made wine and a biscuit. It consists entirely of sweets; jams, cakes, and various *gôches*—*gôches à pommes*, *gôches à grosseilles*, *gôches à beurre*. Sugar and milk are put liberally into every cup; and such hyper-inquisitiveness as a desire to know whether you take one or neither never occurs to the well-regulated Island mind. When you have eaten all you are able, you are urgently pressed to take a little more. It is considered good manners to do so

When

When on the appointed day Owen found himself again at Mon Désir, he looked at Agnes Allez for the first time with a genuine interest. The ten thousand pounds mentioned by Carrel had stuck fast in the younger man's mind.

The girl sat at the tea-tray, and her grandmother faced her. The guest was at one side of the table, and the boy Frederic Allez on the other. Owen observed in him the same soft eyes, the same regular, well-proportioned features as his sister's. But his mouth would not stay shut, his fingers were never at rest, he laughed foolishly when he encountered Owen's gaze.

"I love dogs, they are so faithful," he told the visitor suddenly, apropos of nothing.

Owen assented.

His grandmother and sister did not pay him much attention, but a maid waited on him as though he were a child of six, passed him his tea, and placed wedges of cake and *gôche* upon his plate.

Mrs. Le Messurier ate little, folded her decrepit hand on the edge of the table, and looked on.

"I sometimes can't remember," she said, "that a whole generation has been taken away from me. When I look at Agnes and Freddy I could think it was the other Agnes and my boy John, who used to sit just so with me forty years ago. But we lived down in town then. Ah, but it is a *pitée*, a *pitée*, that they should have been taken and a poor, useless, old woman like me left behind!"

Owen was infinitely bored by her regrets. He had no natural sympathy or patience with the old. He gave an audible sigh of relief when, tea over, it was proposed that Agnes should show him the garden. Small and well-kept, its paths were soon explored; but at the end was a little observatory reached by a dozen wooden steps. A red-cushioned bench ran round the interior, and the front

front of the construction, of glass and three-sided, gave an admirable view over immense skies and an island-strewn sea.

"It's beautiful, is it not?" said Agnes, with a gentle pride in its beauty. "To me it seems quite as beautiful as the Riviera. Not that I've ever been there, of course, but gran'ma took poor Uncle John there the last year of his life, and we have a picture of it hanging in the drawing-room."

She named to Owen the different islands. "That one there is St. Maclou, and further on is the Ile des Marchants. Over there to the left is the Petite Ste. Marguerite. We can't often see the Grande Ste. Marguerite without the glasses, but Freddy will go and get them."

The boy who had given them his company the whole time, punctuating their phrases with his foolish laughs, blundered-off on this errand with an expression of consequential glee. Owen and the girl were left alone.

The vast expanse of sea below them still glittered in the light of the afterglow, but the cloud-curtain of evening was drawing over the eastern sky—a dreamy, delicious cloud-curtain of a soft lilac colour, opaque and yet transparent, permitting scintillating hints of the blue day behind to pierce through. And across its surface floated filmy wreathes of a fading rose-colour, while high above the observatory trembled the first faintly-shining star.

But Owen looked only at the young girl, and she grew embarrassed beneath his gaze. He knew it was on his account that she wore that elaborate, but hopelessly provincial, Sunday frock; on his account, that before coming out she had gone upstairs to fetch her Sunday hat, instead of putting on the every-day one which hung in the hall. He knew it was on his account that she was blushing so warmly; that it was to give herself a countenance she fingered her sleeve so nervously, unhooking it at the wrist, trying

trying to hook it again, not succeeding and persisting in the attempt, while every instant tinged her cheeks with a livelier rose.

Owen watched her in silence, smiling behind his moustache. Then he leaned over, took hold of her hand, and fastened it for her. He was pleasantly stimulated by the tremor he felt running through her when his fingers touched her skin.

Then the boy burst open the door, handed his sister the glasses, and flung himself down with his wearying laugh, on the cushion beside her.

"I love dogs," he said to Owen, just as he had done before, "don't you? They are so faithful." It appeared to be a stock phrase of his, beyond which he could not get.

During the next six weeks Owen was often at Mon Désir, and his visits to Agnes and his assignations with Margot afforded him agreeable alternative recreation from his work.

He had known for long, however, that Agnes was in love with him—he had for long made up his mind that she and her ten thousand pounds were desirable possessions—before he said any word to the girl herself. And then, as generally happens, the crisis came fortuitously, unpremeditatedly. They were out on the cliffs together. She had been showing him Bercéau Bay, which lies below Mon Désir. They had stepped from a door in the garden into a green lane, and followed it down, down through veils and mazes of April greenness, until it suddenly stopped with them on a grassy plateau overlooking the winged bay. At their feet the shadow of the hill behind them lay upon the water, but out farther it sparkled in the sunshine with jewel-like colour and brilliancy. When they had climbed the steep cliff path on the
other

other side, they had stopped a moment to notice the gulls and cormorants perched on the rock ledges beneath them, and all at once the decisive words had passed his lips, and the girl was looking up at him with soft brown eyes that overflowed with love, with tears, before he quite knew how it had come about. But after all he was glad to have it settled, and to have the engagement sealed and confirmed that same night by Mrs. Le Messurier's tremulous, hesitating, not over-cordial sanction.

No, she was not over-cordial, the old skin-flint, he told himself as he went away, not so grateful as she should have been, but all the same, this disconcerting element in her attitude did not prevent him from boasting complacently of his good fortune to Carrel.

Carrel was comparatively sober, and his mood then was invariably a fleeing one. And his heart fed on a furious hatred and envy of Owen. He envied him his twenty-eight years, his sobriety, his strength of character. He hated his ill-breeding, his cock-sureness, his low ambitions. And though he had been glad enough when Owen had purchased the house and practice, he chose now to consider him an interloper who had ousted him from his proper place. He therefore at once planted a knife in Owen's vanity, and gave him some information he had previously held back.

"So you are going to marry little Agnès Allez? Well, you might do worse. The old lady is bound to leave her a nice little nest egg, but I expect she'll tie it up pretty tightly too. She and the old man didn't spend forty years of their lives in the drapery business, saving ha'pence, for the first vagrant Englishman who comes along to have the squandering of."

"What's that?" said Owen sharply, unable to conceal his disgust.

Carrel

Carrel turned the knife round with dexterous fingers. "You didn't suppose she was one of the *Le Mesuriers* of *Rozaine*, did you? Pooh! She kept the shop in the High Street which *Roget* has now, and that's where the money comes from."

Owen, the son of a third-rate London attorney, naturally recoiled from the prospect of an alliance with retail trade. But perhaps *Allez*, the father, had been a gentleman?

Carrel quenched this hope at once.

"Tom *Allez* was son of a man who kept a fruit-stall in the Arcade. He couldn't afford to stock himself, but sold for the growers on commission. However, towards the end of his life, he began to grow tomatoes himself *ou' Cottu way*, and was doing very well when he died, and Tom, who was always an ass, brought everything to rack and ruin. But he was already married to *Agnes Le Messurier*, so the old people took the pair of 'em home to live with them. And Tom never did anything for the rest of his life but develop *Bright's disease*, which carried him off when he was forty-one. The boy is an imbecile, as you see. And, by the bye, in counting your eggs, he must be reckoned with. Half the money will go to him, you may be sure. I doubt whether *Agnes* will get more than two hundred a year after all."

For twenty-four hours Owen meditated on this news, weighing in the balance his social ambitions against a possible five thousand pounds.

Then he came to Carrel again. "Look here," he said, "you understand these damned little Islands better than I do. Would it really make any difference in my career to contract such a marriage?"

"It would only keep you out of the society of the precious *Sixties* you are so anxious to cultivate, for the rest of your life," chuckled Carrel; "it would only be remembered against you to

the sixth generation. At present, as an outsider, a stranger, you are in neither camp, but once you marry a Le Messurier with two s's, you place yourself among the Forties for ever."

From this date onwards, Owen's speculations were given to the problem of how he could easiest get loose from his engagement.

II

Agnes Allez stood in her bedroom, tortured by apprehension and suspense. She asked herself what could be going on in the best parlour below her, where Owen was closeted with her grandmother, and she forbidden to join them. Her grandmother had written to Owen, asking him to call upon her, and had said to the girl, before he came, "Now, perhaps I shall send for you, but until then remain in your room."

But already half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, had gone by, and the longed-for summons did not reach her; her keen ears still detected the murmurous rumble of voices coming up from below. Then, of a sudden, they ceased: she heard the glass-door of the hall shut to, and, from outside, firm steps grind down the gravel. She ran to the open window, and through the slots of the shutters saw her lover's tall figure pass down the path and out of the gate. He never once turned his head, but taking the road to Jacques-le-Port, was lost to view behind its trees. Then came her grandmother calling to her from the hall, and she went down.

Mrs. Le Messurier told her, with kindness indeed, but also with the melancholy satisfaction which the very old find in evil tidings, that her engagement with Dr. Owen must be considered at an end. She had never completely approved of him, but lately she had heard stories, which, if true, could only merit the severest condemnation

condemnation. She had given him the opportunity of demonstrating their falsehood. He had failed to do so to her satisfaction, and thereupon she had told him, as she now told Agnes, that the engagement between them was at an end.

The girl's first feeling was one of burning indignation against the persons who had dared to slander her lover. She knew little of what had been said, she understood less, but she was sure, she was convinced, before hearing anything, that it was all untrue.

"Pedvinn talks of bringing an action against Thoumes and his wife," Mrs. Le Messurier told her, "for misappropriating poor Louis Renouf's property."

"But not against Jack, I suppose. because he could not keep the poor old man alive!" Agnes cried, with flaming cheeks. Renouf was a patient of Owen's, who had died about three weeks before.

"The girl Margot has been seen going in and out of the surgery ever since your engagement, child."

"And suppose she has," cried Agnes, astonished, "what harm is there in that?"

"But when her first anger had cooled down she awoke to a sense of her own misery, the cruelty of her fate. She had not been engaged three months, and already the beautiful dream which had come into her life was shattered at a touch. Until the unforgettable moment when Owen had first called at *Mon Désir*, she had led such dull, such monotonous days; not unhappy ones, simply because she had known no happier ones to gauge them by. She had often smiled since to remember that she had been used to find excitement in a summer picnic with the De Souchy girls at Rocquaine, in a winter lecture with magic-lantern illustrations at the Town Library.

In those days she had known of love in much the same vague unrealising

unrealising way that she had known of the Desert of Sahara ; but, she had touched the fringe of courtship when young Mallienne, the builder's son, had offered her peppermints during evening chapel one Sunday last December. When she met him after that she used to smile and blush.

She, of course, had always supposed that she should some day marry. Everybody did. Last summer her friend Caroline de Souchy had married Mr. Geraud, pharmacien at St. Héliers ; but he was bald, forty years of age, and not at all handsome, and although Agnes had been one of the bridesmaids, the affair had left her cold and unmoved.

But with Owen's first visit she had suddenly awoke to the knowledge of love, and this wonderful fact, this stupendous miracle rather, had changed for her the whole world. It was as though she were endowed with a new sense ; she saw meaning and beauty everywhere ; her perceptions acquired clearness at the same time that her eyes grew clearer, more intense, that her cheek took on a lovelier colour, her mouth a sweeter, a more engaging smile.

Every hour, every moment, that she had spent in Owen's company was indelibly engraved on her memory. She could call up each particular occasion at will. She had learned his portrait off by heart at that first visit, she had done nothing but add graces to it ever since. She thought him the most handsome, the most distinguished-looking man she had ever seen. She admired his black hair, his dark eyes, his sallow skin. She admired the way he held himself, the way he dressed, although she had observed on that first visit that the stiff edges of his cuffs were frayed, although she had seen, as she watched him away from the door, that his boot-heels were trodden down on the outside. But in spite of his shabby clothes, he looked a thousand times the superior of young Mallienne,

Mallienne, of any of the young men she knew, in their best Sunday broadcloth.

And this was before she had formulated, even to herself, her feelings for him ; long before that ecstatic, that magical moment, when he had taken her into his arms, had kissed her, had kissed her mouth, had said, "Well, little one, do you know I am very fond of you, and I fancy you don't altogether dislike me, eh ?"

That had happened on a Sunday afternoon, April 28th ; a date she could never forget. They were out upon the côte ; Freddy was nominally with them, but kept wandering away to gather the wild hyacinths which just then carpeted the ground with blue. He kept bringing her bunches of them to take care of ; she could feel again the thick, pale-green, shiny stems grasped in her hand. And they were climbing the steep path which winds up from the bay to the brow of the cliff, and her dress brushed against the encroaching gorse and bracken, and her eyes followed a couple of white butterflies gyrating on ahead ; or, looking down from the height on which she stood, she saw the smooth sea below her, paving, as with a green translucent marble, every inlet, every crevice of the bay.

Then the path had bent outwards to skirt a great boulder of granite, and there, right under the shelter of the rock, was a circular clearing, a resting-place, spread with the sweet, short cliff-grass, where a broad ledge of the stone offered a natural seat.

It was here that he had kissed her, and the flowers had fallen in a blue confusion at her feet, and, "Oh, I love you so," she had whispered, and he had laughed, and said, "Yes, child, I could see that from the very first."

Then they had sat down, he with his arm round her waist. "Well, I must call you Agnes now, I suppose," he had said ; and she

she had timidly asked him his name, and he had told her, John Ashford Owen, but that his friends commonly called him Jack. "Then I may call you Jack, too, because I am going to be your best friend of all," she had answered, and then Freddy had come up and broken into loud lamentation over the scattered flowers. To appease him they had both knelt down in the grass and helped him gather them up.

Jack had kissed her many times since, but never perhaps in quite the same way. At least, she had never experienced since quite the same sweet tremulous emotion. And yet she loved him more devotedly every day. Every day her affection sent out fresh delicate tendrils which rooted themselves inextricably in him.

And now they were to be rudely torn up; at a word all her joy, all her heaven was to come to an end. It was too cruel. And for what reason? Because wicked, envious people invented calumnies concerning him. It was too monstrous.

She passed a miserable night, but with the morning plucked up faint heart again. It was impossible her engagement should really for ever be at an end. With a little time, a little patience, things must come right. Her sufferings were now all for Jack. How wounded, how outraged he must have felt, never even to have looked back when on Saturday he had left the house.

Oh, she must write to him; must tell him to have courage, not to give her up, and all would yet be well.

In the warm, silent solitude of her shuttered bedroom she wrote her first love-letter, an adorable, naïve, rambling letter; and waited in fluttering expectation during three interminable days for his reply. When it came, she had to read it twice over before she understood it. Correctly expressed, formal, in his rather illegible hand sprawling over two sides of the paper, Owen wrote that he had too much self-respect to wish to force himself on.

on a family where he was not appreciated, and too high a sense of honour to accept her well-meant proposal for a clandestine engagement.

When understanding came, she broke into floods of weeping ; then dried her tears, and sought excuses for his seeming coldness. She found them in his pride ; it was naturally up in arms, after the rebuff it had received. If he had addressed her merely as "My dear Agnes," it was because he thought it probable Mrs. Le Messurier would see the letter ; but he had signed himself "Yours, nevertheless." This was intended to show her he loved her still. Before evening, the very cause of her morning's anguish was converted into another proof of the nobility of her lover's mind.

By the end of twenty-four hours she had persuaded herself she ought to write to him again, to reproach him gently, tenderly for his attitude towards her, to assure him of her unalterable constancy, to implore him too, to be true. It was written on a Sunday, and she carried the letter to evening chapel with her, inside the bosom of her frock, both to sanctify it as it were, and to have the pleasure of feeling it against her heart as long as possible. Happy letter ! by to-morrow morning it was to have the joy, the glory, of lying in *his* hand. Her grandmother never went to chapel a second time, and Freddy made no objection to passing round by the letter-box on the way home.

There was a day of long suspense, but when Agnes came down to breakfast on Tuesday morning, purposely earlier than the others, she found his answer lying on her plate.

With her heart beating violently, she took it up, studied every line, every dot of the superscription, noticed that the stamp had been put on crookedly, that the flap of the envelope went down into a long point. She turned it over and over in her hand, filled
with

with a sort of sweet terror as she speculated on its contents. But the fear that in a few moments she would no longer be alone came to determine her. She pulled it hastily open, tearing the envelope into great jags, and unfolded a sheet of note-paper which contained five lines. They began, "Dear Miss Allez," expressed the polite regret that Mrs. Le Messurier's decided action in the matter made it impossible the writer should permit himself any longer the pleasure of corresponding with her, and were signed "Very truly yours, J. Ashford Owen."

The girl turned red, then white. Her hands trembled, her blood ran cold. She heard her grandmother and Freddy in the hall. To hide her emotion, she got up and walked over to the window. The August flowers in the garden seemed to look at her with jeering, fleeing eyes.

Jack had written her a horrible letter; she repeated this to herself over and over again. He had no heart. She thought of all that had passed between them; she called up, line by line, every word of her letter to him. Her cheeks burned with shame. She hated him, hated him. She would renounce him entirely, never think of him again. And even as she said it, she burst into tears, flung herself upon her bed, and kissed and passionately kissed the letter which had pierced her heart.

Therewith began again the eternal rehabilitative process, in which every woman shows herself such an adept in relation to the man she loves.

Jack had not meant to be cruel, but he was quick-tempered; he resented the treatment he had received. Still smarting from a sense of injury, he would naturally be unjust towards every one, angry even with her. But, of course, he loved her all the same. He had loved her only a few weeks ago. One could not change so absolutely in so short a time. One could not love and not love

love as one puts on and off a coat. It was she who was wicked to doubt him, who was unreasonable not to make allowances, who was stupid not to read his real feelings beneath the disguising words.

But no sooner was her idol again set upon his altar, than doubt, suspicion, assailed her anew. And so the struggle continued between her longing to believe her lover perfect and the revolt of her reason, her dignity, against his conduct towards her. Yet with every victory love flowed stronger, resentment ebbed insensibly away.

The last traces of resentment vanished when one Saturday in town she met him suddenly face to face. She was passing the Town Library, and exactly as she passed, Owen came out, standing still, as he saw her, on the step.

Her pulses beat tumultuously, the colour ran to her cheeks.

"Oh, Jack," she cried, taking his hand, "how could you write to me so coldly, so cruelly? If you knew what I have suffered! And it was not my fault . . ."

From the first moment of seeing her, Owen had stood transfixed; silent. Now he pushed back the swing door, and held it wide.

"At least come in here," he said slowly; "don't let us have a scene in the street."

They stood together in a corner of the great, granite-flagged hall, in cool, quiet contrast with the sunshine and turmoil outside.

"You don't care for me any more?" she asked, keen for the denial, which came indeed, but which to her supersensitiveness seemed to lack emphasis.

But his excuses were emphatic enough.

"It's no more my fault than it's yours," he told her; "it's your grandmother

grandmother who won't have anything to say to me, the Lord knows why?"

He spoke interrogatively, and she flamed a deprecating crimson.

"I can't very well force my way into the house against her wishes, can I?" he went on.

"No; but, dearest Jack, you needn't be angry with me, and we can wait a little, and I know everything will come right. If only you will go on loving me? You do love me still?" she asked again. "I shall die if you don't!"

He smiled down upon her, twisting his moustache-end; a softer look came into his eyes.

"So the poor little girlie can't live without me?" he said, and gently squeezed her arm. Her heart welled up with adoration and gratitude.

A stranger coming down the polished wooden staircase cast a sympathetic glance at this little Island love idyll.

But Owen looked at his watch.

"Oh, confound it! Half-past twelve already, and I ought to be up at Rohais by now. I've an appointment there. I don't like to leave you, but——"

"Is it *very* important?" she asked wistfully.

"It's a new patient."

"Oh, then in that case, of course you must go," she said, with ready abnegation of her pleasure where it clashed with his interests. "But when shall I see you again? Ah, do let me see you."

"Oh, . . . well, . . . all right! I'll stroll up to-morrow in the course of the afternoon, to Berceau Bay, . . . but if I'm prevented, you'll be down again to market, next Saturday, I suppose, eh?"

And

And he was gone.

Agnes sat down for a few moments to recover her composure. Her eyes rested on the red goldfish swimming futilely round and round the glass bowl in the centre of the hall ; but at her ear was the joy-killing whisper that the appointment had been a fictitious one.

Nevertheless, she persuaded herself he would come next day. She spent three hours, hidden in the bracken, at a point whence she could overlook the whole bay. When he did not come, she deferred her hopes to the following Saturday, to be again disappointed. He was not to be seen. Neither in the Market Place, nor at the Library, nor yet in Contrée Mansel ; for she could not refrain from the poor pleasure of passing along the street in which he lived, of glancing shamefacedly at his house, of envying wildly the servant she saw for an instant at an upper window. She would have thought it a privilege to be allowed to clean his boots.

But when she found herself at home that evening she was seized by an excess of silent despair. There seemed nothing on earth to do : nothing to live for.

Yet the buoyancy of youth is hard to suppress. It takes repeated blows to beat it down, just as the tears shed at eighteen may be bitter indeed, but do not furrow the cheeks.

As the year brought round another spring, Agnes found that her spirits were growing brighter with the days. She loved Jack more than ever. It was impossible to be absolutely unhappy with such a love in her heart ; with the knowledge that she lived in the same Island with him ; that once a week at least she could walk through the streets he daily trod ; that any day she ran the chance of meeting him again, of speaking at least with some one who had just spoken with him.

Against

Against dates on which she heard his name thus mentioned she put a cross of red ink in the little calendar she carried in her purse. When she was having her new summer frock fitted, the dressmaker's three-year-old son ran into the room. Agnes, who was fond of children, spoke kindly to him; but the mother, kneeling on the floor with upstretched arms and a mouthful of pins, shook her head menacingly.

"Ah, Johnnie's a bad boy. He won't take his medicine. I'll have to tell Dr. Owen 'bout him."

"Does Dr. Owen attend him?" Agnes asked, flutteringly; and the woman explained he was doctor of the club to which her husband belonged.

"He's a very clever doctor," ventured Agnes, all covered with blushes. "Don't you think so?"

"Ah, my good!" said the other, as who should say doctors are necessary evils, and there's not much to choose between them. "But he give Johnnie a fine new double piece last time he come, didn't he, Johnnie? 'Tisn't the value I ever looks at," she explained to Agnes, "but the kind thought."

Agnes felt a glow of pride at the generosity, the good-heartedness of her lover, and on going away pressed a whole British shilling into Johnnie's treacly little paw. Against this day she placed two crosses in her calendar, and the episode filled her thoughts for a week, to be succeeded by a more precious one.

The annual picnic came round, provided by the chapel for its Sunday-school. Agnes, as one of the teachers, went with the rest. They drove in waggonettes to Rocquaine, and the one point of the day to which she looked forward with excitement, with a thrill, was the passing Owen's house on the way back late at night. They went by a longer way, but they always came down Contrée Mansel on the way home. She distinguished from quite

quite a distance *his* illuminated parlour window.; but the white blind was drawn down; she was just going to be bitterly disappointed, when a shadow, *his* shadow, passed across it. She glowed with pleasure, with gratitude, for her great good luck, and answered young Mallienne, who sat beside her, with strange irrelevancy.

For in spite of everything she could not realise to herself that Owen did not love her; her heart refused to envisage it. Although he made no effort to see her, although he gave no sign, she still believed that all would yet be well. She leaned on Fate; something would be sure to happen . . . some day, when she was her own mistress . . . She thought of him constantly, loved him as tenderly as before.

The summer was extraordinarily fine. The heat which had begun in March, lasted right through to September; in the middle of the day from July onwards, it was almost unbearable. One Saturday, when Agnes had been into town as usual, and the omnibus filling up almost the moment it reached the Market Place, had been obliged to walk back, she found, on her return, Frederic in one of those states of nervous excitement from which he periodically suffered. Mrs. Le Messurier had given him a soothing draught, the last in the house. It was essential to have more in case it were required in the night or the next day.

Agnes, pleased at the chance of a second journey into town, since it gave her a second chance of meeting Owen, volunteered to go and get it. Mrs. Le Messurier told her she looked done up with the heat already, but that she might go when she had had her dinner, and must take the omnibus both ways.

It was half-past two when she reached town, crossed over to Mauger's, and waited while the prescription was made up, and then

then had ten minutes on her hands before the three o'clock omnibus left for St. Gilles.

Mr. de Souchy stood in his shirt-sleeves on the threshold of his shop. Agnes stopped to speak to him, and inquire after the girls. They were all away from home now, but doing well. Their mother received cheerful letters every week. Agnes charged the old man with kind messages for them, and turned to go. He shook her hand heartily. "Well, good-bye, my dear," he said, in his comfortable, resonant voice, "my love to your grand'ma, and ask her when she's going to spend another day with us, eh?"

Coming down the street were a lady and two gentlemen. The men were in tennis flannels, carried rackets and balls. The girl wore a lilac and white frock, the chic of which spoke of St. Héliers at least, if not of Paris.

Agnes recognised the youngest Miss d'Aldernois, her brother the Captain, just back from India, and between the two Jack Owen. He was looking straight towards her.

The delighted blood sprang to her cheek, her eyes sparkled, her mouth smiled. She took a step forward, she half extended her hand . . . and he looked her full in the face without a sign of recognition, and passed on.

Miss d'Aldernois' silk-lined skirt brushed against hers, as, with her pretty head bowed, she chattered volubly with her pretty lisp. The Captain wailed in the roadway.

Agnes stood and watched the three figures with their short, slanting shadows retire further and further down the sunny street.

"Come in and take something," she heard De Souchy saying at her elbow, "a little drop of raspberry vinegar now, it will do you

you good. Or go up and have a chat with mother, eh? You will find her in the drawing-room. She would like to read you Lucy's last letter, I know. It's downright clever."

Agnes shook her head, stammered excuses in a voice that sounded strange in her own ears, and left him.

He had cut her dead; Jack, the man she worshipped. The only man who had ever taken her in his arms and kissed her; the only man by whom she ever wished to be kissed and held. In broad daylight, openly, before witnesses, he had cut her.

Mr. de Souchy had seen what had happened; he had understood; he had pitied her.

An illumination came; Jack was ashamed of her. Because she had shaken hands with the old man, he was ashamed to recognise her before his new friends. She was connected with trade; a child of trade; and he was now received among the Sixties.

A profound humiliation overpowered her, sapped the rest of her strength. The glare of the sun was so intolerable . . . how she longed to be at home, to be in darkness.

She discovered that in her preoccupation she had taken the wrong turning. She hurried back, but the market clock showed seven minutes past three. The omnibus must be half-way up Constitution Hill by now.

There was nothing to do but to walk, as she had walked in the morning. She set out with automatic endurance.

When you get out of the last bit of shadow of the town, and, steeply climbing, reach the level top of the hill, you have before you a long unsheltered stretch of road before you come to the trees of St. Gilles. It is white and dusty underfoot; sun-parched fields lie on either hand; and in July there is a blazing sky above, to the left a blazing sea.

It seemed to Agnes that the sun was darting his rays straight into

into her brain, that the ground was scorching up the soles of her feet. But it did not occur to her to open her umbrella.

The passing scarlet jacket of a soldier made her close her eyes with pain ; the whistle of a boy behind her set all her nerves ajar.

Should she ever get home ? . . . She dragged on with leaden feet and prayed persistently for darkness.

But when at last she lay upon her own bed in such darkness as closed shutters and drawn curtains can give, all she could say was, "Oh, the sun, the sun !" and lift her hand indeterminately towards her head. And when, a few hours before the end, she lost the power of speech, still her hand wandered up every now and again automatically towards her head.

Mrs. Le Messurier sits alone with her grandson in the living-room of *Mon Désir*. He cuts out pictures from the illustrated papers, and she gazes tirelessly through dim and tearless eyes into the past. Bright crowds of long-dead men and women pass before her, and among them the two Agneses are never absent long. Then, all at once, as the boy looks up to claim her attention, with his mirthless laugh, the vision is scattered into thin wreaths of smoke.

